



**MAPPING URBAN INFRASTRUCTURE AVAILABLE TO
MAHARASHTRA'S HOME-BASED WORKERS: A STUDY OF
NASHIK AND SOLAPUR**

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Introduction

The International Labour Organization (ILO) defines homebased work (or home work) as work carried out by a person

- In his or her home or in other premises of his or her choice, other than the workplace of the employer
- For remuneration
- Which results in a product or service as specified by the employer

In the Indian context, homebased work refers to remunerative work performed by individuals on a piece-rate or own-account basis. Roughly 23% of all non agricultural work is homebased and an overwhelming majority of the workers are female. Mumbai's slums are filled with homebased workers, most of who are women, engaged in providing low paid manufacturing and/or services from their homes or common community areas. As part of the large informal sector (93%) of India, they work away in difficult working and living conditions, and are missing from all official data and statistics on labor and from mainstream research. Their fragmented nature and relative invisibility means that there are few initiatives to represent their interests.

This report is the outcome of a study conducted to examine the present condition of homebased workers' dwelling places in the towns of Nasik and Solapur in Maharashtra. While Nasik is situated in the north western part of the state, Solapur is located in Maharashtra's South East region. The purpose of this study is to situate homebased workers' work and life in the broader context of urban infrastructure. The study attempted to do so by mapping the existing civic amenities and services that enable or disable her work, and also by examining the role of her earnings for accessing these services.

This report has been organised in the following way. At first, the introduction and methodology have been briefly discussed. This is followed by a detailed description of



findings from both towns for each of the main areas of this research, namely urban issues impacting homebased workers (land and property, infrastructure, civic services, safety and security), livelihoods, occupational health issues, organising, policy awareness and expectations.

Methodology

LEARN conducted a mapping study with 50 female home workers each in the cities of Solapur and Nashik. Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were used. An interview schedule was prepared and filled out by research teams in each town. In depth interviews and three focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted in each town. The period of data collection was 3rd – 24th Jan 2013 in Solapur, and 7th – 26th Feb 2013 in Nashik. We used purposive sampling technique to get as many respondents interviewed in the previous mapping study commissioned by Homenet in 2011, in order to build on our existing work and knowledge. Almost all of the respondents are members of LEARN Mahila Kamgar Sanghatana (LMKS). The interviews were conducted with a semi-structured format. In Solapur, the following areas were covered: Sai Baba Chowk, Madda Jhopadpatti, Kunchikarwe galli, Neelam Nagar, Balives, Indira Nagar, Karnik Nagar, Ekta Nagar, Panchsheel Nagar, 70 feet road, Sriram Nagar, MIDC, Shastri Nagar, Ashok Chowk, Kranti Jhopadpatti, New Pachha Peth and Lal Jhopadpatti. In Nashik, the areas covered were: Uttam Nagar, Bhagat Singh Nagar, Shivpuri Chowk, CIDCO, MIDC, Ambad and Panchavati.

Profile of respondents

All the respondents in the study are female. While in Nashik, they are in the large age spread of 16-60 years; in Solapur this spread is even larger to include women in the age range of 16-78 years. This in itself is an important learning. Homebased work is not limited to a particular age— one finds that small children, young adults, middle aged persons as well as senior citizens are involved in various trades associated with homebased work. The versatile and diversified nature of homebased trades, with highly



broken down, specific tasks to be performed by multiple people, makes it an 'open' livelihood source for individuals with all levels of skills and expertise— from a novice to a master.

A. LIVELIHOOD

i. Work, Income and Working relations

In Nashik, the various trades (33) that we came across were artificial jewelry making, bangle filling, beauty parlour services, box making, cane basket weaving, cap stitching, cashew peeling, cleaning rice grains, cleaning vegetables, cooking and tiffin service, cottonwick making (three types), door hanging (toran) making, electric 'starter' making, flower garland making, fried snacks making, incense and dhoop making, lucky draw tickets making & pasting, making bakery items, making cleaning liquid papad making, paper lantern making, plastic moldings, running four mill at home, selling fruits & veg from home, selling provision from home, selling rangoli from home, showpiece making, snacks making (amaranthus sweet, groundnut sweets), soft toys making, stove repairing, tailoring and woollen decorative article making.

In Solapur, we came across 32 different tasks in which home workers were engaged in. These included betelnut (supari) cracking, book stitching (binding), broom making, cane basket weaving, cap stitching, chapati making, crushing chillies, doll-making, embellishment on towels, fried snacks making, garment embroidery, hand sewing, ironing clothes, making woollen door-hanging, night gown stitching, packing of camphor, papad making, quilt making, rakhi making, rukhwat making, saree embellishment, satranji/ cloth carpet embellishment, selling sarees from home, sequins embellishment on woollen door-hangings, sequins embroidery, shenga chatni bhakri making, spices (masala) packing, tailoring, thread (dhaga) cutting/ finishing, thread making (on charkha), towel & napkin stitching and vermicelli making. Broadly, these tasks could be categorised under the umbrella of manufacturing, garment and textile finishing and food processing.



ii. Income and Expenditure

As mentioned above there are a number of trades that engage home workers in the two towns of Nashik and Solapur. While payment for each of the tasks is different and takes varied amounts of time, in general it was found that most workers are able to get an income in the range of Rs.1-50 per day. We are aware that this is a wide range and does not necessarily capture the low or high nature of payment. However, an earlier mapping study (Gartenberg 2011) sheds light on the exact income of these workers for highly specialized tasks such as those mentioned above. Most of these workers are piece-rate workers, which means that they are a part of a large chain of manufacturing or service, which ties them usually to a middleman or an employer, who desires to get a certain part of the manufacturing done at low rates. Most of the work tends to be done by hand, even though in some cases specific machines are used. There are also those that are 'own-account' workers or what are also known as the 'self-employed', who are entrepreneurs, operating out of their homes. These may include women who, for instance, run beauty parlours from their homes, those that sell provision from one of the windows of their homes (which opens to the main street outside) etc. For the purpose of this study, we have covered both types of homebased workers, the piece-rate workers as well as the own-account workers. The former have relatively less control over their work timings, use of creativity, determining of income and procurement options compared to the latter.

The size of respondents' families was found to be an important factor in the way earnings from home work were spent in the household. In both towns, a large majority of the respondents had family size of 4-6 members. The second largest group of respondents' family size was 1-3 members. In one extreme case in Solapur, it was found that 22 people lived in the same household, which had one kitchen.

A large part of the income earned by homebased workers goes towards paying for different items and events in the family. The item that tops the list is buying vegetables, groceries and provision for consumption in the household. It was found that almost all respondents used their earnings from home work to buy vegetables, fruits, meat and dairy



products. This is followed by spending on children's education, followed by healthcare related medical expenses. Despite the measly incomes of most home workers, little savings over time help in absorbing the shocks of price rise, increase in education related spending, sudden medical emergencies, death and celebration, thereby maintaining stability in the household. This often happens at the cost of the workers' own health. The relative 'invisibility' of her work blurs her existence from the counting of active workforce, which could have ideally gone a long way in providing support and relief to her existing circumstances and conditions.

In this short study, we have tried to study the specific issues of the 'dwelling space' of the urban home worker in two towns of Maharashtra, namely, Nashik and Solapur. Let us now start discussing the main findings of this study.

B. LAND AND PROPERTY

Most respondents in both towns did not wish to divulge information about ownership of land and property ownership. However, they did share information about their ownership status as far as their homes were concerned. This will be discussed in detail in the following sections on urban infrastructure.

C. INFRASTRUCTURE

Housing: In Nashik, an overwhelming majority of respondents (34) had ownership of their homes, the rest lived in rental homes (15) and one respondent's residence status was not known. For the 15 respondents living as tenants, monthly rentals ranged from Rs. 1001-1500 (7 respondents), followed by two respondents paying Rs. 1501-2000, then four respondents paying in the range of Rs. 2001-2500 and rental for two respondents was not known. Informal interactions with the workers also revealed that a large number of them had migrated from hamlets and smaller villages to Nashik, while their parents or husbands moved in search of better opportunities.



In Solapur, the distribution was a lot more even, in that, of the fifty respondents, 23 owned their homes, 24 lived in rental ones and three respondents that did not have ownership, but possession of their homes, perhaps indicating illegal settlement. Among the 23 living as tenants, one paid rent in the range of Rs. 201-300, three paid Rs. 301-400 per month, six respondents paid Rs. 401-500 as rental, four in the range of Rs. 701-800, two respondents each paid in the ranges of Rs. 901-1000 and Rs. 1101-1200. This was followed by fewer respondents in the remaining categories of rental payments. One each paid in the ranges of Rs. 501-600, Rs. 601-700, Rs. 1401-1500, Rs. 1901-2000 and one paid as high as Rs. 4001-4500 per month. It is obvious that fewer families were found in the higher ranges. It is evident that most of the homebased workers living in rental arrangements; the payouts per month vary from Rs. 201-800. This is an important finding because it indicates that cheap housing is one of the characteristics of homebased work in Solapur, and to a certain extent even in Nashik, where the overall cost and standard of living is much higher. Another associated finding is that home workers contribute at least some part of their earnings to housing costs— whether owned or rented.

Water Supply. Distinct differences have shown up with regards to water supply in the two towns. While Nashik was marked by overall self-sufficiency, Solapur was found to be enveloped in issues due to water scarcity as well as very old water supply infrastructure. These claims were also seconded by the deputy commissioner of the Solapur Municipal Corporation (SMC).

In Nashik, forty eight respondents had municipal water taps in their homes, one respondent talked of fetching water from her neighbour's home and one respondent's access to water was not known. Drinking water is filtered manually and used for consumption. Water tanks are available for storage. Water supply is available for one hour on all days of the week except one. For the respondents who stay in rented homes, the payment for water is included in the monthly rental. Information on charges for the use of water was not easily available. Twenty respondents did not know how much they paid for the usage of water. Of the remaining, seven paid in the range of Rs. 1001-1100,



four paid in the range of Rs. 201-300, three each paid in the ranges Rs. 101-200 and Rs. 1101-1200. Two each paid in the ranges Rs.1-100, Rs. 501-600 and Rs.901-1000. One respondent each paid in the ranges of Rs. 601-700, Rs.1301-1400, Rs.1501-1600, Rs. 1701-1800 and also as high as Rs. 3001-3100. Earnings from homebased work pay for a small percentage of this expense. The great amount of variance in the above cases could indicate differential water use charges and taxes in different areas of town. Since homebased work is a geographically dispersed activity, such diversity in payouts must carefully be factored in for policy decisions for home workers.

In Solapur, water for drinking and cleaning purposes is the same. It is separated merely by the holding containers. Drinking water is saved in utensils (*ghagar*) at home and water for cleaning purposes is stored in large plastic/ metal drums. Some of the rental households also have access to a large water tank (also known as *houd*) categorised by joint ownership, which is used sometimes. Of the 50 respondents interviewed, 37 respondents had municipal taps in their homes and 13 respondents draw water mainly from shared municipal taps. All of these families pay water tax annually, but the amount is unknown. The 3 respondents staying on illegal settlements draw water from municipal taps too, but do not pay water tax for it. Water supply happens every alternate day for four hours. Timings are fixed in the sense that in certain areas the water supply is always in the morning, other areas in the afternoon and even others in the evening. However, the trade union activists working in the abovementioned areas of Solapur have stated that this is not the case, water supply timings are erratic and the force of water flow from the taps is very weak. This builds up a number of tense situations especially in cases where people share common municipal taps.

Sanitation: With regards to sanitation facilities, it was found that in Solapur, 29 respondents have toilets in their own homes, 11 use municipal toilets and 10 respondents have access to privately built shared toilets, which have free access. These toilets are built by the houseowner/s for a bunch of homes in the same area. Residents take turns in cleaning and maintaining the toilets by themselves. There is free access to the municipal



toilets as well and the cleaning and maintenance is done by municipal workers. The rest have toilets in their homes. Respondents dwelling in rental homes have shared that they find it particularly difficult to overcome the problems related to sanitation facilities—especially the municipal ones. The municipal toilets are poorly maintained, most of them do not have doors, and the cleaning is not done on a regular basis. Some of the trade union activists also mentioned that in the recent years, cleaning has been done only after residents have complained of the unhygienic conditions and filthy environment of the shared toilets. There are a few private toilets too, but none of the respondents was found to have used this alternative, since they are pay-and-use facilities. Interactions with trade union activists also revealed that due to the frequency of complaints regarding cleanliness from residents, there were also talks by the municipal corporation of closing down the municipal toilets. This would be a significant jolt to the homebased workers' and their families' health and well-being, that rely on free access to toilets, since they cannot build toilets in their homes and the low earnings mean that they do not have the luxury of using pay-and-use toilets on a daily basis.

Interactions with the deputy commissioner of SMC revealed that in fact, there could be a probable solution to this issue. Under the central government program IRC-WASH project, there is scope for building 16000 toilets. In collaboration with the zonal officers, he would be in a position to influence and leverage resources in order to create toilet facilities for the areas under consideration, given that there are a large number of homebased workers in each. This report could be useful in the attempts to do so.

In Nashik, problems related to sanitation facilities almost entirely did not exist. 49 of the 50 respondents had toilet facilities in their homes, and information for one of the respondents was not known.

Garbage disposal: Garbage disposal in both towns was mainly through municipal garbage collection vehicle. In Nashik, the collection is done on a daily basis, while in Solapur it is handled by the municipal garbage collection vehicle every alternate day. One of the



respondents in Nashik talked of throwing garbage in the open. In both towns, there was no discussion on door-to-door collection or attempts at segregation of waste at source.

Sewerage disposal: Drainage facilities in Nashik emerged to be more sophisticated than the ones in Solapur. Due to underground piping networks, there was no scope for collection of waste water. In Solapur, the situation was the opposite. Sewerage disposal is done mainly through old open gutters, and the maintenance and cleanliness responsibility is handled by municipal workers. The maintenance and cleaning is intermittent, and happens only after residents complain. This indicates that constant redressal from the residents is required to manage sewerage disposal, no mechanism exists to manage and monitor this work regularly. This negatively affects the home workers' health and as a consequence her work. Further, the health of her family is also impaired and the expenditure on medical problems of her family shoot up.

Electricity: Electricity is supplied by the municipal corporation in both towns. Due to the self-sufficiency in terms of housing in Nashik, the electricity grid and setup is a lot more effective and formalised as compared to Solapur. Of the 50 respondents in Nashik, the largest group of 10 paid Rs. 201-300 per month towards electricity charges, followed by 8 who paid in the range of Rs. 101-200, seven who paid in the range of Rs. 301-400, five who paid in the ranges of Rs. 401-500, four who paid in the range of Rs. 501-600 and three who paid in the range of Rs. 601-700. Five respondents in Nashik did not know how much they paid towards electricity expenses. 23 respondents in Nashik said that load shedding (power cut off) occurred once a week. In Solapur on the other hand, the expenses towards electricity were not known, as most respondents did not have a clear idea on the money spent on this item. The team also noticed that in few households in Solapur, there was no electricity and candles, oil lamps were being used for illumination.

Street Lighting: Areas covered in both towns had ample street lighting, making illumination in the evening and night a non-issue. This point will connect with the issue on safety and security below.



D. CIVIC SERVICES

Education: In both Nashik and Solapur, it was found that homebased workers spent a considerable share of their income on their children's education. In Nashik, a large majority of the respondents' children attended government aided private schools and colleges, few attended municipal schools and one worker's child studied in the vocational institute ITI. In Solapur, out of the 50, there were 39 respondents whose children go to educational institutions, where the medium of instruction is Marathi. Of these 39 of the children go to government aided private schools and colleges, while two workers' children access municipal/ government institutions. Six respondents' children are currently pursuing higher education in colleges, while children of all others are in schools.

Health: This section deals with both occupational health hazards of home work as well as home workers' present access patterns to healthcare services in the two towns.

Home workers suffer from a number of ailments. These are related both to their work, their physical environment and poverty. Due to the nature of their work which involves several hours of constant sitting, bending, hand movement, eye-hand precision usually in low lighting, they face severe back-aches, shoulder pain, bad posture, eye-pain, leg-aches, stomach problems, respiratory problems (especially those working in textile industry like thread making, thread cutting), knee pain, eye-burning and watering (in case of workers making quilts, crushing chillies), finger cuts (needles piercing through fingers while book binding, and knives in cashew nut peeling). In addition to these occupational hazards, the problems with sanitation facilities, sewerage disposal and culturally constructed problems such as domestic violence, workers and their families go through considerable health issues throughout the year. In Nashik, an overwhelming majority use private clinics run by medical practitioners nearest to their homes for 'instant relief' to most of these aches and pains. Women use their savings to pay for health services for themselves and their families. In cases where surgeries or complicated procedures are required, they use the municipal civil hospital. In most cases however, public and private healthcare services are



used. No insurance cover is available for any health conditions. Two of the respondents also mentioned using the ESI hospital which is accorded especially for workers under the Beedi workers board.

The situation is reverse in Solapur. Only 14 of the 50 respondents claim to be using private healthcare services, all the rest use municipal clinics and hospitals. For Beedi workers and security guards, ESI hospitals cater to their healthcare needs free of cost or at a nominal fee. But the overwhelming majority of workers not protected by the state, the options are highly limited. The proliferation of private clinics in all these areas is an indication of this phenomenon. For the poorest of the poor, private clinics are expensive. Trade union activists from Solapur mentioned that the behaviour of hospital staff and doctors towards the urban poor is impolite, but due to lack of other alternatives, they have to access these facilities. The bad behaviour of the staff and doctors, coupled with ineffective medical treatment and dismal hygiene conditions in government hospitals necessitates that they access these private clinics. For major illnesses and surgeries however, they have no option but to rely on government hospitals, as the costs of performing these procedures in private hospitals are exorbitant. We must be mindful of the fact that this situation forces the working poor to access the closest, more expensive option of private clinics where treatment and hygiene conditions are slightly better.

PDS and access to food supplies

In Nashik, 39 respondents and in Solapur 35 respondents had ration cards. All of these cards were 'Orange', indicating that they cannot avail of only partial subsidy. In both towns, ration card holders and non-ration card holders bought foodgrains and other provisions from the MR shops as well as local provision stores (*kirana*). In Solapur, another interesting aspect was that a large majority of the respondents also bought provisions from D Mart—the privately owned low-budget mall. In Nashik, respondents buy commodities from the local grocery and provision (*kirana*) store. Some of these foodgrains are available at double the price as that of the MR shops. For instance, for rice they have to pay Rs. 15 per kg instead of Rs. 8 per kg at the MR shop. In Solapur, 31 of



the 50 respondents had ration cards and they used them to buy foodgrains and other essential commodities from the MR shops. However, those without ration cards too accessed the MR shops, by paying almost double the subsidised rates of these commodities. Hence, even though 31 respondents had ration cards and bought commodities at subsidised rates, a total of 47 respondents were found to use the PDS for buying essentials. This is an important finding, which goes to show that the subsidized MR shops play an important role in the lives of the urban working poor. There are experts who claim that the PDS has failed and must be dismantled, but the findings from Solapur indicate the opposite. That said, it is also true that most respondents complained of the dubious quality of the food grains available in MR shops, as well as the low quantities in which certain items like sugar and kerosene were available. Therefore, it is clear that in order to strengthen its outreach, the PDS certainly needs a rethink on a much larger level for all its merits and demerits.

Public transport: In both towns, public transport was found to be very expensive. Firstly, there are no local trains for speedy and affordable local travel. Second, the bus services are intermittent and the frequency is low. The most convenient option therefore is either by foot or by auto rickshaws. The latter tend to be very expensive, thereby restricting the mobility of the home worker to explore better avenues for procuring work. Even though all the areas covered in this study are well connected to the rest of the city by *pucca* roads, the lack of public transportation facilities increases the financial burden for most home workers.

Pensions and insurance: None of the 100 workers covered in this study had any form of insurance cover. Of the 15 senior citizens (14 in Solapur and 1 in Nashik), the existence was hand-to-mouth. The fact that they were still continuing to work in order to make ends meet is itself a matter of shame as far as the state is concerned. The Vermicelli maker and the thread maker in Solapur with in their tiny huts with corrugated aluminum sheets for walls would certainly benefit from slight relief from the state. To this end, the trade union activists of LEARN Mahila Kamgar Sanghatana are working to enroll and



register seniors in the Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Yojana designed to support abandoned and destitute women, widows, unsupported senior women and so on.

Safety and Security. Surprisingly, most respondents did not have much to say about this question. In Nashik and Solapur, most respondents said that they felt highly safe where they lived, the streets were secure. However, a large number of women in Nashik (35) and almost all in Solapur simply did not answer this question, even though some raised concerns about thefts and stealing rows.

E. ORGANISING- AFFILIATIONS AND ORGANISATIONS

Almost all of the workers covered in this study are members of the LEARN Mahila Kamgar Sanghatana (LMKS), which works through Labour Education and Research Network (LEARN) Mumbai. The membership of LMKS includes female workers in the informal sector namely homebased workers, domestic workers, micro factory workers, street vendors and waste pickers in three towns of Maharashtra state, namely Nashik, Mumbai and Solapur. The few non-members that were interviewed through this study, became members of LMKS soon after. In general however, all respondents were affiliated to groups that demarcated them by religion and caste and several other markers of identity or geography, but none that brought them all together under the aegis of being 'workers'. Thousands of homebased workers do not have any membership based organisation that is mobilising them as 'workers'. This necessitates bringing the issues of homebased workers in the public domain, mainstreaming their work and life in academics, trade unions and membership based organisations thereby pushing for gaining 'visibility' to those involved in this profession.



F. POLICY AWARENESS, SUPPORT AND RESPONSE

As mentioned previously, home workers are not counted in official statistics as workers. Hence, their large numbers not just in Nashik and Solapur but all over the country remain the invisible force behind making goods and services available at affordable rates for urban dwellers. Either by coincidence or sheer neglect, the larger world of academics and action research too, has failed to focus on their contributions to the economy or take note of their issues. Given this background no policy has been conceptualised or formed for homebased workers as a workforce category in particular. There are a number of other state and central government policies that *could* apply by virtue of them (or at least a vast majority of them) being women. For instance, the Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Yojana applies to destitute women and widows, which could be tapped for providing some relief to their poor circumstances. As mentioned in the section on sanitation, the IRC-WASH project of the central government too, could be used for improving the access to toilets. Another important point needs to be made here. On a number of levels, improvements in the dwelling spaces and civic amenities available for the homebased workers, will *not only* benefit the workers but their families and whole communities. An improvement in the overall environment will also give a boost to the workers' and her family's well-being, thereby increasing her savings and leading to potential improvement in the family's nutrition needs, healthcare and education needs, which will in turn incentivise homebased work. As far as the awareness of these policies is concerned, there are few that workers know of. The one that is currently making a buzz is the procurement of the Aadhar (UID) card, which could potentially end the problems relating to identity of the individual. Getting access to Below Poverty Line (BPL) cards is also not easy, but LMKS leaders in both towns are now geared to addressing this issue in the current year.



G. EXPECTATIONS AND DEMANDS

So far as the demands of the workers are concerned, specific issues have emerged in both towns under consideration. In Nashik, housing for those living in rental arrangements is the main issue. The workers and trade union activists seem to think that the 'Gharkul' scheme of the state government of Maharashtra could be tapped for a percentage of home workers that are most in need of one. This category includes single mothers, senior citizens fending for themselves, widows and so on. Secondly, the issue of increasing expenses on the education of children was also found to be serious. The workers wondered if scholarships to children of homebased workers could be constituted in the future, just as the ones promised under the domestic workers' board of the state. The senior workers wished to know when they could stop working and start living a post-retirement life. Working through their late 60s and 70s, they find it hard to physically manage the workload and expect the state to extend pension and other financial resources to informal sector workers like them. Some of the other thoughts that came up during discussions are helping to find markets for home workers' goods, addressing the issue of domestic violence, ensuring safety in the face of public violence occurring at times and improvement in the government healthcare facilities.

In Solapur, the foremost issue is that of sanitation and water supply. Toilet facilities, as discussed above, are dismal and maintenance too is poor. The impact of bad sanitation facilities for those depending directly on shared toilets are far-reaching—controlling urine for long periods may cause kidney stone and a number of bladder and kidney malfunctions. This is particularly problematic also because during menstrual cycles, it becomes extensively difficult to maintain personal hygiene when the facilities are less than ideal. Much of the homebased work done by women in Solapur involves sitting in one place, which also causes gastrointestinal ailments. Together, these make for dangerous metabolic conditions, which could easily be avoided with a little support from the municipal corporation. To this end, the initiative presented spontaneously by the deputy commissioner of SMC is a welcome move. The second issue that has emerged in



Solapur is that of water supply. The erratic time schedules of water supply, which as it is comes every alternate day, makes for tremendous shortage. Additionally, the force of water flow from the tap is weak. In such conditions, people consume and use less than ideal amounts of water for personal hygiene and hydration. Lastly, the issue of identity has been important in Solapur. In other words, having an identity proof that is recognised by the government is difficult to procure. This problem emerged when some of the respondents tried to apply for Aadhar (UID) card, which claimed that birth certificate is mandatory. Despite the fact that this is not a mandatory requirement, some of the respondents tried to get a birth certificate in order to get a UID card. The municipal corporation denied them birth certificates on the grounds that there might be some paper back in the village which could be produced against with the SMC could give them a birth certificate. In this manner, they have to run pillar to post for getting any paperwork in their name and in the process lose livelihood for those days. If all these workers were registered as homebased workers in a live national registry, even if it means through their UID database, that would go a long way in helping to resolve their identity issues and access policies that apply specifically to them.

In the face of severe hardship, the homebased workers continue to work away in silence and invisibility in many Nashiks and Solapurs of the country. This and the previous mapping exercise commissioned by Homenet was one of the first to give them identity, provide details regarding the nature of their work and life, their earnings, their issues, the urban infrastructure and civic amenities available to them presently and in identifying their importance in the national economy. As a trade union, LMKS expects that intensive mapping and action research must increasingly start to look at home workers' work and lives from as many perspectives and disciplines as possible. A large debate on this cohort of workers is an urgent need. At all levels of the government machinery through the various departments, concerted and coordinated efforts are required in order to create an enabling environment for homeworkers in the state. The findings of this study are a mere beginning to this process.



Town planning which involves taking into consideration such basic needs of its citizens; irrespective of class, religion, caste and occupation; serves to create an enabling environment for homebased workers to perform their tasks in a more productive way. Surely, there are problems within the trade itself, but if the worker has to deal with problems in her immediate physical environment as well, they serve to undermine her effort and time investments in the tasks at hand. Policy that deals with such issues of the immediate physical environment of the home workers in a sensitive manner and lobbies for the rights of the homebased worker are the need of the hour.