

## Home-based Worker's Oral History



‘Within these four walls...’

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Naziya, 36 years, is a home-based tailor, and a mother of three. She has completed high school, and is a resident of Taj Bagh area in Nagpur city. Naziya is a self-taught tailor, with nearly a decade of experience, and from this work she earns approximately Rs. 10,000 per month.

Naziya was brought up in a family that valued education highly. She was able to finish school and ace the 10th grade due to a free and open environment at home. This gave her motivation to enroll in the science stream to pursue further education. However, her life completely changed after she got married. Her hopes and aspirations were destroyed. Her new family treated her badly and imposed several limits on her speech, her livelihood, and her mobility. Her husband would frequently beat her and forced her to withdraw from the tailoring course, telling her to concentrate solely on household responsibilities. After the seven days of undergoing her husband's erratic bouts of anger, Naziya finally succumbed to the pressure and withdrew herself from the tailoring training.

The financial situation at Naziya's house was dire. She wanted to contribute to her household. She continued to practice tailoring at home, despite the controlled and unsympathetic environment of the home. She considered tailoring as a meaningful and feasible way to make money while taking care of her family. She became a fine tailor, and experimented with various styles, patterns and fabrics. She turned to the internet out of curiosity and a desire to upgrade her skills, where she discovered informative videos on advanced tailoring and garment designing techniques. Soon, her customer-base grew and she started stitching beautiful dresses. Her popularity soared. She now dreams of opening her own boutique to display her designs and stitch fashionable garments for her customers. Speaking about her ambitions, Naziya says, *"Silaai ke kaam se mujhe paisa milta hain usse main bank mein bachat karti hu... mujhe mera ghar banana hain, jisse me apne kaam ko aage lekar ja sakti hoon... yaha ek paryay hain ki me bahar jakar kuch kaam karr sakti hu par ghar ki bandishon ke karan mujhe apne chaar diwaron ke bhitari hi apni kahani likhni hain"* (I save the money I get from tailoring work, and deposit it in the bank... I want to build a house so that I can set up my business there and take it forward... it is an alternative... I could have worked outside (home) but due to my household restrictions, I have to write my story within the four walls of my house...)

While Naziya continues home-based tailoring, she often reflects on the various challenges associated with work and gender roles. Naziya's customers visit her small home for ordering various styles of stitched garments. her husband claims he gets irritated due to this, and even now beats her up. Many home-based workers across India face a similar reality, their contribution to the household income for home-based work often makes them a victim of domestic violence. Work-related OSH issues also include chronic back pain and demeaning vision.

While Naziya navigates through the labyrinth of exploitative intersectional conditions, she continues her search for support and self-growth. She draws strength from her participation in the activities of LEARN's informal women workers collective in Nagpur city, and is an active member of a women 's SHG in her area, where she also diligently makes deposits from her modest earnings. She uses this platform to voice her thoughts and opinions, and share her many day-to-day struggles as well as small and big triumphs.