



About the ETI homemaker guidelines:

Background and development

Increasing concern about homeworkers' conditions, and a need for clearer guidance on how to apply the ETI Base Code to homeworkers, led to the formation of the ETI Homeworkers Group in 2002. The Group went on to develop and test an initial set of guidelines on identifying, monitoring and improving conditions for homeworkers in international supply chains. The guidelines have recently been revised in the light of that experience, and are available for members along with additional case studies, tools and other resources, as described in this briefing document.

Background

Homeworkers are a valuable part of many supply chains, carrying out tasks such as embroidery, stitching, assembly and packaging in countries around the world. However, evidence shows that they frequently work under poor terms and conditions.

In 2001, members of the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI) became increasingly concerned about homeworkers' conditions and about how to apply the ETI Base Code to homeworkers around the world. As a result, the ETI Homeworkers Group was formed in 2002 with representatives of ETI's retailer, trade union and NGO members.

Identifying the need for guidance

A key aim of the Group was to increase its understanding of how to interpret, monitor and implement the ETI Base Code with homeworkers.

Applying codes of labour practice is particularly challenging in the homeworker context, because of the complexity of supply chains involving homeworkers, and the typically wide gap between the retail point and homeworkers. To help with this task, the Homeworkers Group commissioned a review of current knowledge and experience of applying corporate codes of labour practice with homeworkers. The review showed that advice on homeworking in supply chains is available from bodies such as the International Labour Organisation (ILO). However, ETI members felt they needed more specific, practical advice on interpreting and monitoring the Code in the homeworker context.

Developing the guidelines

Following the review, in 2002 members began drafting a set of guidelines based on the experience of project group members, and on existing standards such as ILO Convention 177 on Home Work.

The Group also researched two case studies to inform the development of the guidelines. The case studies – on the Christmas cracker industry in the UK and the embellishment industry in India – were chosen on the basis of where Group members most commonly sourced products involving homeworkers, and included a developed and developing economy situation.

The following activities were carried out during the development phase of the guidelines:

In the UK. The Group carried out a two-year consultation process with a large proportion of cracker suppliers selling to retailer members, to understand their methods of working with homeworkers. Homeworkers in these suppliers' chains were then consulted by an NGO Group member, to identify their priority issues and concerns, and gather responses to the draft guidelines. International homeworker organisations were also consulted on the 2004 draft of the guidelines.

In India. In 2003, the Group consulted Indian stakeholders – including partners of UK Group members, Indian government officials and an NGO representative – about its approach. It also commissioned extensive research into homeworkers' conditions, issues and priorities with stakeholders involved in the fabric embellishment industry in Delhi and Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh). Views from exporters, contractors, subcontractors, homeworkers, NGOs and trade unions were collected through a series of focus group discussions and individual interviews.

Following this research, a tripartite group was set up in Delhi to assimilate the findings from the research and to review and further develop the guidelines drafted by UK Group members.



Throughout 2005, the UK and Delhi Groups worked in close partnership to develop and refine the guidelines. A wide variety of stakeholders in India were consulted on the draft, which was then revised on the basis of comments.

Finalising the guidelines (1st edition)

The first edition of the homeworker guidelines was finalised in 2006. The guidelines were designed to provide practical guidance to ETI Homeworker Project Group members and others on:

- identifying the presence of homeworking in supply chains;
- applying, implementing and monitoring the ETI Base Code with homeworkers; and
- meeting the standards of the ETI Base Code with homeworkers.

Learning by doing

Once they had finalised the first edition of the guidelines, Group members turned their attention to putting the guidance into practice, and sharing their experiences of implementing and monitoring the Base Code with homeworkers. Key learning was shared through regular project group meetings, during which members also identified where they needed additional information and guidance.

Reviewing and revising the guidelines

In 2009, the Group started a process to update and revise the guidelines in the light of this experience. Project Group members in the UK and in Delhi provided input to the process during focus group meetings and individual interviews. In addition, a questionnaire was sent to the hundreds of people – retailers, suppliers, community and charity organisations, trade unions, academics, consultants and others – who had downloaded the guidelines from the ETI website. The questionnaire asked for users' feedback on the guidelines and their views on future needs for guidance.

The consultation indicated that existing and potential users of the guidelines wanted more practical examples and case studies of how to implement codes of labour practice with homeworkers, and tools to help them do that (such as questionnaires, formats for data collection and record keeping, example policies, etc). The consultation also showed that users would welcome shorter guidance tailored to the specific needs of different players in the supply chain.

The revised guidelines (2nd edition)

The revised homeworker guidelines consists of two key guidance documents – one for retailers and one for suppliers – with a range of background and supporting documents for different stakeholders including community groups, trade unions, contractors and those with a general interest.

You can **download the new versions of guidelines** for retailers and suppliers and see a list of all current tools and case studies here: www.ethicaltrade.org/in-action/projects/homeworkers-project/guidelines.

With the help of Project Group members and others, we will continue developing the resource bank of tools and case studies on homeworking. In particular, we are looking to build our collection of practical tools, case studies and other resources to help identify, monitor and improve conditions for homeworkers. Please **contact us (eti@eti.org.uk)** if you would like to share your experience of working with homeworkers.

ETI Homeworker Project Group members (at January 2010)

UK Group members

Retailers and suppliers: Asda George, Boden, The Body Shop International, Gap Inc, Madison Hosiery, Marks & Spencer, Monsoon/Accessorize, Mothercare, Next plc, Primark, River Island, Sainsbury's, Tesco, Traidcraft (Observers: New Look, Inditex)

Trade unions: The Trades Union Congress (TUC)

NGOs: Oxfam GB, Homeworkers Worldwide, Traidcraft Exchange, WIEGO

Delhi Group members (at October 2009)

Retailers: Gap Inc, Marks & Spencer, Monsoon/Accessorize, Next plc, Primark (Observers: Inditex, New Look)

Suppliers/exporters: Nandeetas, Aesthetics, Ranika Design, Orient Clothing, Details, Radnik Exports, V&S

Agents: Li & Fung, Impulse

Trade unions: Hind Mazdoor Sabha

NGOs: The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), the Centre for Education and Communication (CEC)

Notes: Group members in 2006, no longer involved: Boots the Chemist, National Group on Homeworking.