



Enabling Home-based Work through the Delhi Master Plan: A Technical report by Main Bhi Dilli Campaign



Source: Rashmi Chaudhary for WIEGO

Main Bhi Dilli is a people’s campaign aiming to envision and enable a more inclusive city. It is a collective of civil society organisations, activists, researchers and others who work on diverse issues of housing, livelihood, gender and other rights. Visit www.mainbhidilli.com for more information on the campaign.

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I. INTRODUCTION: DEFINITION & KEY FIGURES

The category of workers who do productive or remunerative work from within or around their homes are home-based workers. These workers produce a wide range of low and high-end goods and services for both domestic and global markets. There are two kinds of home-based workers:

- Self-employed/ Own-account workers- those who buy their own raw material and supplies and sell their own finished goods, mainly to local customers and buyers
- Sub-contracted/ homeworkers/ Piece-rate workers- those who are part of larger national and global supply chains and produce goods for them

This is one of the most invisible forms of urban informal employment due to the serious data gap that exists about it. At the national level however, WIEGO used NSSO's Employment and Unemployment Surveys (2011-12) to estimate that home-based work accounts for at least 18% of urban employment and up to 32% of urban informal employment which amounts to a figure of around 16.9 million urban home-based workers in India (Raveendran, Sudarshan, & Vanek, 2013).

City-level data is much more difficult to compute though the work of civil society organisations confirm that it is a very significant employer. Some estimates say that at least around 7% of the non-agricultural workforce in Delhi are home-based workers with a higher share of 13% for women and 6% for men (Chen & Sinha, 2019). This means over 4 lakh workers in Delhi alone, many of them women, are home-based workers. Activists and civil society organisations estimate that this is likely to be an under-representation of the actual numbers.

The lack of recognition of this large section of the workforce is also evident in urban planning documents including the Delhi Master Plan 2021 which makes no mention of home-based work. This document aims to lay out the case for recognition of home-based work in the next Delhi Master Plan and enabling provisions which will impact a large number of women workers in the city.

II. MAKING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN HOME AND WORK IN CITY PLANNING

The traditional planner's vision of strict separation between residential spaces and work spaces is immediately broken down when it comes to home-based work. It is a fact that for the vast majority of the urban poor, the house they live in is a key productive asset that is leveraged for work and this is especially so for home-based workers who live and work in the same space.

Some key aspects are left out when formal planning mechanisms view housing only from the angle of shelter provision. These include:

- **Penalisation of work due to restrictive zoning regulations-** Overly strict separation of land uses (such as single-use zones) can negatively impact the livelihoods of urban home-based workers by adding a layer of 'illegality' to their work. The present Master Plan of Delhi has a list of 119 household industries that are permissible in only selected streets/places (DDA-MPD2021). This is very restrictive and prone to misuse by the authorities to harass workers. In particular, relaxations for home-based work that are made for professional categories (such as lawyers and doctors) are not extended to home-based workers. Relaxations that exist tend to be in higher category colonies while resettlement colonies or planned low-income colonies do not allow or recognise work at home.
- **Hampered productivity and more work burden due to poor housing-** According to the 2011 Census, 62% of Delhi lives in one or two room houses while average HH size is 5 (GoI, 2011). A small house hampers productivity, as the home-based worker cannot take bulk work orders because she cannot store raw materials and work continuously as there are competing needs for the same space by other household members and activities. Also, due to the poor quality of housing, equipment, raw materials and finished goods often get damaged. Problems like lack of ventilation and irregular basic services also poses occupational health and safety risks which have to be borne by the worker (Chen & Sinha, 2019).
- **Increased burden due to lack of public infrastructure and basic services-** Many home-based workers live in congested, under-serviced, or low-lying areas. It is important to highlight that health and environmental problems pose particular concerns for home-based workers, as they both live and work in those environments (Chen & Sinha, 2019). This includes lack of piped water, problems of sewage, open or non-existent drains, and poor waste management which takes a toll on the health and productivity of home-based workers (Datta, Kaur, & Nandi, 2018) . Additionally, for women workers, the time they spend collecting water or disposing garbage represents an opportunity cost, time spent away from their market activities. Several studies have demonstrated that infrastructure upgradation of piped water and sanitation connections freed up women's time and improved their health which resulted in higher

incomes from home-based work (Chen & Sinha, 2019) (Rusling, 2010). Also, home-based does not mean home-bound as home-based workers have to leave their homes on a regular basis as part of their work. So, the distance between the market/contractor/customer and the home-cum-workplace and the availability and cost of public transport directly impact the time and money spent in commuting and transporting goods and, thus, the productivity and earnings of the workers.

- **Lack of work-related infrastructure in housing for the poor-** Even planned housing for the urban poor including resettlement colonies which are both formal and legal have no provisions or supportive infrastructure for workers like common work spaces, storage spaces etc. Due to lack of adequate provisioning for their needs, workers are forced to use the limited space of their homes for this purpose due to which they face many problems.

- **Loss of work linkages due to housing shocks like eviction-** The policy of evicting self-built informal settlements results in loss of home and work, and is thus detrimental both for housing and livelihood security. Research has shown that relocating from self-built kutcha tenements to concrete houses may not be preferred if the new locations are in the urban peripheries where there is no work available and commuting is difficult (Chen & Sinha, 2019). There is a need to challenge the assumption that since work happens at home, events like evictions and resettlement do not have any effect. The loss of work linkages impacts heavily on home-based workers and lowers their bargaining power in wage settlement.

III. LOCATING HOME-BASED WORK IN DELHI¹

Key Home-based clusters in Delhi (NCT)



¹ This is a non-exhaustive mapping of locations collated from several sources of data. These include membership data of worker organisations (SEWA, MHT), primary research conducted HomeNet South Asia (HNSA), WIEGO, Institute of Social Studies Trust etc. and secondary research studies which has found evidence of home-based work. More details can be found in the Annexure.

IV. KEY FEATURES OF HOME-BASED WORK IN DELHI AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING

Clustering of home-based work in low-income housing categories

The mapping of home-based work clusters in Delhi shows that it is mostly prevalent in low-income housing categories- E to G in the property tax classification slabs (details in the annexure). In particular, many clusters are in JJ resettlement colonies which may be due to their peripheral location that restricts availability of other work options particularly for women.

MPD 2021 brought in a mixed-use policy which allows the presence of certain economic activities in residential areas. It also recognised the need for a differentiated approach across different settlement typologies. However, at present, this list is quite restrictive in terms of permissible uses and is limited to certain types of retail shops, public and semi-public facilities and professional activity. The list of permissible uses remains the same across all categories of housing from A to G, only difference being in the plot size and street width requirement for mixed-use classification (DDA-MPD2021).

The evidence on home-based work suggests that low income settlements are usually hubs of productivity which is not restricted to retail and professional services, but also manufacturing, packaging, repair etc. often at a very micro scale. The present mixed-use policy is not cognisant of the varying nature of economic activities in different housing typologies and therefore takes a narrow view of restrictive listing.

Difference between home-based work and household industry in terms of scale and possibility of harm

At present, the household industry is defined as those industrial units employing up to 5 workers and using up to 5kw power. This is granted after registration with the government, clearance from Pollution Control Board and requires separate industrial electric connection and municipal license (DDA-MPD2021). The principle behind this is to prevent harm in terms of pollution and exposure if industrial units function in the midst of residential areas.

Home-based work is typically much smaller in scale than this and consists of a single worker who may or may not be helped by other family members. The types of home-based work seen in Delhi is done largely by hand without making use of any heavy machinery. The list below is a non-exhaustive compilation of some of the key types of home-based work that has been observed. It can be seen that they are largely non-polluting and do not involve the use of harmful or noxious substances.

- Garment- handloom, embroidery, embellishment, beadwork, stitching, jeans thread-

cutting, stitching of buttons and hooks

- Manufacturing- strap-cutting and sole-making of footwear, cloth bag and paper envelope making, belt-making, toy-making, box-making, kitchen tools making, bamboo mat and fish net weaving, putting threads into bookmarks, taping of speaker components, making decorative pieces, making buffs for machines polishing steel, making bindis, festival decorations etc.
- Packaging of toys, cooking powders, festival colours, lime etc.
- Food processing- vegetable sorting, peeling and shelling, sweet-making
- Scrap-related work- wire cutting, material recovery from old electronics and cars

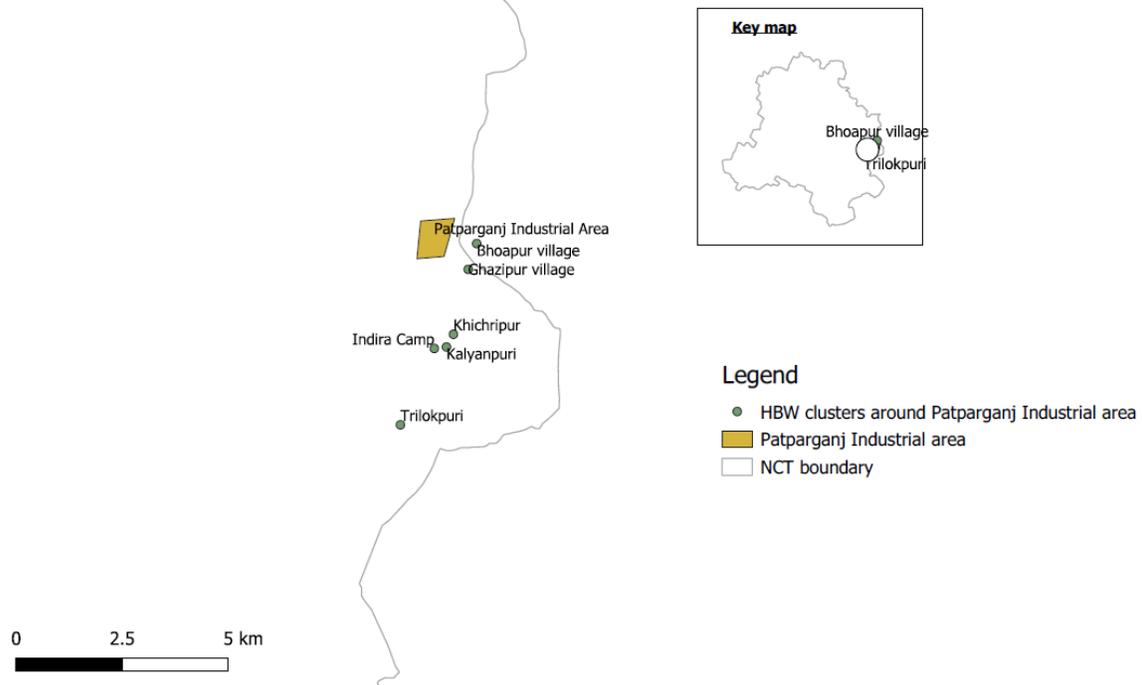
Therefore, it can be seen that home-based work is qualitatively very different in scale and is mostly non-polluting or non-hazardous work. Hence it does not warrant the strict requirements applicable for industrial use in residential areas, rather such economic activity must be allowed and promoted.

Prevalence of home-based work in settlements proximal to industrial areas

According to the Delhi Economic Survey 2018-19, the secondary sector contributes around 14% of GSV in Delhi of which manufacturing is the largest component (GoD, 2019). The previous masterplan noted the presence of industrial activity in some unplanned areas and also laid down norms for their regularisation. However, there has not been much movement in this regard as the focus of state industrial policy has remained on relocation to new industrial parks on the urban periphery.

The effect that presence of industries has on labour outside the factory or formal estate is often ignored in both industrial as well as planning policy. Research in Delhi's industrial estates has shown that there are complex inter-linkages between planned and unplanned industrial areas and the surrounding residential neighbourhoods from where the labour is sourced (Mukhopadhyay & Kunduri, 2019). Work travels back and forth across these categories, and proximity is crucial especially for women workers. Women home-based workers are often key links in larger industrial supply chains who perform part of the manufacturing or packaging work for firms located in the industrial estates. Therefore, industrial relocation has a devastating impact on not only the organised labour force working inside the factories, but also the unorganised labour force who receives work from there through contractors.

Home-based work clusters in Patparganj Industrial influence zone



Source: Mapping by WIEGO

The mapping of home-based work clusters in Delhi shows that many of them are located in close spatial proximity to industrial estates, both planned and unplanned (Sharma & Kunduri, 2015). At present, the norms in the MPD do not take cognisance of spillover of work from industrial parks to surrounding areas which includes smaller scattered establishments and residential settlements. The evidence on home-based work in Delhi suggests that low-income residential neighbourhoods around industrial estates are characterised by such activity as well and draw a significant source of livelihood from them.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MPD 2041

1. *The master plan should take an expansive approach which recognises the crucial links between livelihood and housing wherein homes are also workplaces.* The mixed-use policy needs to be cognisant of the reality of low-income settlements (formal and informal) being vibrant centres of economic activity which should be protected and enabled. Apart from retail and professional uses which may suffice to address the needs in higher-income categories, low-income housing categories should have a more expanded use permissibility that enables a wide range of activities like small-scale manufacturing, repair, sorting and recycling, packaging etc.
2. Home-based workers contribute immensely to economic value chains and also majorly support their household income. Many of them are women whose valuable contributions are currently invisibilized. *Recognition of home-based workers in the Delhi Master Plan 2041 would be a step to increase visibility and protections for this vulnerable group of workers.*
3. Home-based work is typically very small in scale and does not involve use of heavy machinery or toxic substances which could cause pollution or nuisance in the residential neighbourhood. *The next DMP should explicitly recognise and permit home-based work that is different from HH industry. In the longer term, restrictive or negative listing of 'permissible' uses should be done away with in order to shift to a broader 'no-harm' principle.* It has been suggested that along with the nature of use, scale can be a useful metric to measure this (Nohn, 2011). Rather than prescribing particular 'permissible uses' which has the danger of leaving out many possible uses and leading to their penalisation, a short negative list that takes account of both nature of use and scale can be the way forward.
4. The secondary or industrial sector is a key source of livelihood for the urban poor including home-based workers who are sub-contracted by formal firms. *It is necessary that the master plan recognises an influence zone around industrial estates where greater relaxations are given for home-based workers. In the longer term, regularisation of unplanned industrial areas must be prioritised over a relocation policy.* Such redevelopment plans should include smaller establishments like workshops and good quality affordable housing for workers as key components.
5. In order to support livelihoods, availability of affordable and good-quality housing with secure tenure is most important. Location is important here as the policy of eviction and relocation destroys livelihoods. Instead, *in-situ upgradation of settlements through provision of basic services has to be prioritised.* The norms for housing for the urban poor must reflect their economic needs, in size and design so that they can be incrementally built on and altered. There are several good practice models for this such as those practiced by

Mahila Housing SEWA Trust which includes design interventions like putting in air vent in the ceiling allowing for natural light to enter homes, ramp provision in common areas, storage spaces, utilisation of basements, climate-resilient housing etc. Apart from this, the inclusion of community level economic spaces must be integral to design of housing for the poor.

6. ***Universal access to basic infrastructure-services like water, sanitation, waste management and public transport are important not only from a rights-based perspective, but also to enhance livelihoods of the urban poor.*** Services like regular collection of solid waste are also important for home-based workers as their work often generates waste like left-over rubber or metal, the disposal of which also eats into their time and meagre earnings. Furthermore, the design of public spaces should focus on enhancing walkability and vibrant local economies through creating pedestrian-friendly wider pavements, foot-over bridges, street lighting, improving last-mile connectivity etc.
6. ***The plan should also envision supportive infrastructure for livelihood at the community level in all planned low-income settlements like resettlement colonies, regularised unauthorised colonies (E-H) and settlements marked for upgradation.*** This can be in the form of common work sheds, storage facilities, exclusive markets for home-based workers etc.

VI. References

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ANNEXURE

S No	Location	Settlement type	Kinds of HBW	Source of information
1	Savda Ghevra	JJ Resettlement colony	Sandal-strap cutting, Bead work, Toy packaging, Envelope-making, Cloth-bag making etc.	ISST-HNSA research study
2	Rajiv Nagar	Regularised unauthorised colony	Embroidery, artificial flower making , purse making, belt making, bra-making, thread-cutting, festival decorations making	SEWA membership
3	Sunder Nagri	JJ Resettlement colony	Handloom, Embroidery, embellishment, Footwear-making, Packaging, belt-making, festival decorations making	SEWA membership, WIEGO photo documentation- https://www.wiego.org/blog/photo-essay-part-i-home-place-work
4	Nand Nagari	JJ Resettlement colony- Category F	Embroidery/embellishment, packaging	SEWA membership
5	Mustafabad	Unauthorised colony	Embroidery/embellishment, Stitching, Electronics scrap removing and cutting, Belt-making, purse-making, bra-making	SEWA membership
6	Shriram Colony, Khajuri Khas	Unauthorised colony	Embroidery/embellishment, Stitching, Electronics scrap removing and cutting, Belt-making, purse-making, bra-making	SEWA membership

7	Mullah Colony	JJ Cluster	Thread-cutting, toy packaging, button and hook placing , envelope making	SEWA membership
8	New Ashok Nagar	Unauthorised colony	Thread-cutting, toy packaging, button and hook placing , envelope making	SEWA membership
9	Kalyanpuri	JJ Resettlement colony - Category G	Toy-packaging, garland making, making of kitchen tools, stitching	ISST-HNSA research study
10	Trilokpuri	JJ Resettlement colony - Category G	Toy-packaging, garland making, making of kitchen tools, stitching	ISST-HNSA research study
11	Khichripur	JJ Resettlement colony - Category G	Toy-packaging, garland making, making of kitchen tools, stitching, thread-cutting	Sharma & Kunduri (2015) research study
12	Indira Camp	JJ Cluster	putting threads into bookmarks, taping of speaker components, making decorative pieces, making buffs for machines polishing steel, making <i>bindis</i> , fixing insoles and upper parts for footwear	Sharma & Kunduri (2015) research study
13	Ghazipur village	Urban village	putting threads into bookmarks, taping of speaker components, making decorative pieces, making buffs for machines polishing steel, making <i>bindis</i> , fixing insoles and upper parts for footwear	Sharma & Kunduri (2015) research study

14	Bhoapur village	Urban village	putting threads into bookmarks, taping of speaker components, making decorative pieces, making buffs for machines polishing steel, making <i>bindis</i> , fixing insoles and upper parts for footwear	Sharma & Kunduri (2015) research study
15	New Ranjeet Nagar-Dhobi Ghat & Munshiram Bagh	Slum cluster within unauthorised colony	Thread-cutting, envelope making	ISST-HNSA research study
16	Batla House-Jamia	Unauthorised colony	Embroidery/embellishment	ISST-HNSA research study
17	Jahangirpuri	JJ Resettlement colony-Category G	Embellishment on garments and bangles, sweet box, artificial flower making, envelope making, festival decorations making, Chickpeas peeling, Choona bharna, stitching, finishing work of bulb holders	ISST-HNSA research study
18	Bhalaswa Dairy	JJ cluster/unauthorised colony	Embellishment on garments and bangles, sweet box, artificial flower making, envelope making, festival decorations making, Chickpeas peeling, Choona bharna, stitching	SEWA membership
19	Raghubir Nagar	JJ Resettlement colony-Category G	Jeans thread-cutting, packaging, envelope making	SEWA membership
20	Azadpur	JJ cluster/unauthorised colony	putting threads into bookmarks, taping of speaker components, making decorative pieces, making buffs for machines polishing steel,	Sharma & Kunduri (2015) research study

			making <i>bindis</i> , fixing insoles and upper parts for footwear	
21	Lal Bagh	JJ cluster	putting threads into bookmarks, taping of speaker components, making decorative pieces, making buffs for machines polishing steel, making <i>bindis</i> , fixing insoles and upper parts for footwear	Sharma & Kunduri (2015) research study
22	Wazirpur	JJ cluster	putting threads into bookmarks, taping of speaker components, making decorative pieces, making buffs for machines polishing steel, making <i>bindis</i> , fixing insoles and upper parts for footwear	Sharma & Kunduri (2015) research study