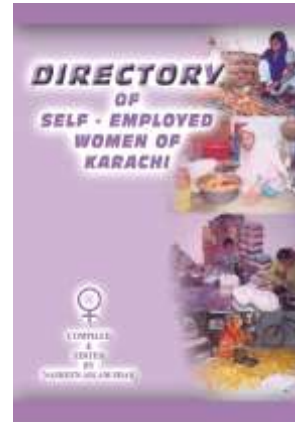


Book Review

Title of the Book: Directory of Self-Employed Women of Karachi
Subject: Research about Self-Employed Women Workers
Compiled and Edited: Nasreen Aslam Shah
Publisher: Centre of Excellence for Women's Studies (CEWS) University of Karachi, Department of Social Work, University of Karachi and Anjuman Taraqqi-e- Niswan
Year: 2010
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Pages: 563



The role of women workers in informal economy has gained attention of researchers and policy makers in the last three decades. Sufficient empirical evidence is available about their role in the economy of developing countries. However, existence in large numbers has not solved their problems and issues. Their economic conditions have not improved and they remain poorest of the poor. The Directory of Self-employed women of Karachi is research based data compiling details about 1800 self-employed/home-based women workers. The study was published in 2010 with the aim to identify the type of work these women are engaged in and the challenges they face during their work. The directory is bilingual having an introduction in both English and Urdu language. The book is divided into two main parts, beginning with introduction and research design, brief details about Karachi City, discussion about legal protection for informal sector followed by some case studies of women workers. The second part consists of town wise details of women workers and their brief profile of work including type of work, number of years they have been doing it, reasons of doing that work, hours of work, educational qualification and some other details. The study showed that women self-employed/home-based workers were engaged in small scale earning activities such as handicrafts, rice cleaning, prawns peeling, cooking and selling street food, preparing pickles, tailoring, hand and machine embroidery work, making shoppers, making herbal medicines, bangle making, traditional cloth making and some had small tuck shops at home. They worked for average 8 to 12 hours a day along with fulfilling their domestic responsibilities. This makes it difficult to balance work and family responsibilities. Most of these women are initiated self-employment fulfill basic needs of their family. High inflation and cost of living compel them to do these low paid jobs. When this study was conducted, there were no laws for protection of their rights. Different organizations worked for their legal rights, Sindh became the first province in



Pakistan that legislated on home-based workers, passing the Sindh Home-based Workers Act, 2018 on May 9, 2018. It is estimated that around 12 million home-based workers are present in Pakistan, while their number is growing by five percent per year. Unfortunately, the laws have not been implemented effectively and workers are deprived of their rights and social security privileges granted under labour laws, according to recent news reports.

Home-based work is a “general category of work within the informal or unorganized sector where workers carry out remunerative activities within their homes or in the surrounding areas but not at the premises of an employer”. Internationally, Home-workers account for a large portion of the jobs in the sectors such as garments, leather, carpet making as well as in new enterprises e.g., assembling microelectronics. These are found in both developed and developing countries like Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India etc. Since the technical revolution domestic or domestic employment has increased exponentially and now it is not limited only to the production, additionally, now it involves services as well, like a lawyer consultant working from home, a doctor consultant working from home for some other country, journalists, etc. It is estimated that there are around 100 million home-based workers; more than half of these are in South Asia while around 80% of these 50 million are women.

Hence it is important to recognize the changing trends of employment in developing as well as developed countries. With in developing countries there are huge variations in type of work and conditions of work for men and women. Research about women in informal sector is therefore important to understand the previous trends and suggesting new directions for future.

Dr. Shagufta Nasreen is an Assistant Professor in the Centre of Excellence for Women's Studies, University of Karachi, Karachi, Pakistan.