



TAINTED GARMENTS

THE EXPLOITATION OF WOMEN
AND GIRLS IN INDIA'S
HOME-BASED GARMENT SECTOR

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— *Siddharth Kara*



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“I do not earn enough in this work.
I am living in a bad condition.”

– A 25-YEAR-OLD GARMENT WORKER NEAR MEERUT





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report offers the most wide-reaching and comprehensive investigation yet into the conditions of work for women and girls in India's home-based garment sector. Women and girls tend to constitute a majority of home-based work across numerous informal sectors, along with the exploitative conditions that come with them, which in turn perpetuates the subordinated and oppressed status of women and girls. Due to the lack of transparency and the informal nature of home-based work, wages are almost always suppressed, conditions can be harsh and hazardous, and the worker has virtually no avenue to seek redress for abusive or unfair conditions. Power imbalances relating to gender further perpetuate the exploitation of female home-based workers, as their liaisons (i.e., labor subcontractors) are typically male and can often be verbally abusive or intimidating in order to secure compliance. The situation of the home-based workers is worsened by the fact that there is little to no regulation or enforcement from the state regarding their conditions of work. Indeed, the researchers found that home-based garment workers in India consist almost entirely of women and girls from historically oppressed ethnic communities who scarcely manage to earn **\$0.15 per hour**.

The Indian garment industry is the second largest manufacturer and exporter in the world after China. The sector directly employs 12.9 million individuals in formal factory settings, and it indirectly employs millions more individuals in informal, home-based settings. The primary destinations of India's garment exports are the United States and the European Union, which receive almost half (47%) of the country's total apparel exports. Scores of major brands and boutique retailers source garments from the areas documented from this project. Many of these companies do a reasonable job at promoting decent conditions in the first-tier factories of their suppliers in India; however, they largely have inadequate visibility into sub-contracted work from their suppliers to home-based workers. Given the size and brand recognition of some of the companies that

source garments from India, they are best positioned to address the findings of this report on a meaningful scale and thereby substantially improve conditions for home-based garment workers in India.

Approximately 85% of the 1,452 home-based garment workers documented for this report exclusively worked in supply chains for the export of apparel products to the United States and European Union, and the remaining 15% worked in a mix of export and domestic production. The home-based work performed by these individuals typically involves the "finishing touches" on a garment, such as embroidery, tasseling, fringing, beadwork, and buttons.

The primary aim of this report is to provide insights into the lives of India's home-based garment workers in the hopes that governments, brands, and non-profits will be better able to coordinate on solutions to address the exploitative conditions documented. To this end, it must be stressed that apparel brands that source garments from India are providing **vital employment** for marginalized women and girls that often have no other options for earning an income. Rather than shift production or cut off suppliers, brands should acknowledge and assess home-based garment work in their supply chains in order to improve working conditions.

The Summary Findings of the research are included in Table 1. At first instance, there are several stark differences between the conditions faced by home-based garment workers in northern India versus southern India. Indeed, one could argue that there are in some ways two different home-based garment sectors in India — northern and southern.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY FINDINGS

	ALL CASES	NORTHERN INDIA	SOUTHERN INDIA
Total cases documented	1,452	1,122	330
Forced labor under Indian law	99.2%	98.9%	100.0%
Forced labor under International law	6.9%	9.0%	0.0%
Bonded labor	4.5%	5.9%	0.0%
Child labor	17.3%	19.1%	11.2%
Child laborers who attend school	42.2%	33.6%	91.9%
Average 8-hour wage	\$1.19	\$1.12	\$1.44
Male	\$2.37	\$2.37	
Female	\$1.12	\$1.05	\$1.44
Wages delayed	35.5%	41.3%	15.8%
Average daily hours worked	6.7	6.8	6.2
Female	95.5%	94.1%	100.0%
Like the work	61.4%	50.4%	98.5%
Began work from a form of duress	62.5%	76.3%	15.5%
Began as a minor	42.8%	51.2%	14.5%
Have another source of income	10.3%	8.9%	15.2%
Average years worked	6.4	6.6	5.6
Average family size	5.4	5.8	4.0
Average income per HH member	\$1.27	\$1.04	\$2.48
Muslim or Scheduled Caste	99.3%	99.7%	97.9%
Would rather leave but cannot	60.4%	73.4%	16.1%
Penalized if work unfinished on time	26.2%	29.9%	13.9%
Free to do other work	60.8%	52.6%	88.8%
Chronic physical ailment or injury	23.2%	29.2%	2.7%
Literate	43.2%	27.4%	97.0%
Keep records of their work	33.4%	18.4%	84.2%
Feel earn enough for a decent life	9.9%	8.6%	14.2%
Have a bank account	51.2%	46.7%	66.7%
Able to save income	9.2%	7.9%	13.3%
Receive medical care	0.1%	0.2%	0%
Belong to a trade union	0%	0%	0%
Have a written agreement for work	0%	0%	0%

A total of 1,452 cases were documented by the researchers: 1,122 cases within 50 kilometers of eight cities in the north, and 330 cases within 30 kilometers of two cities in the south. Most individuals worked six to seven days per week, usually around six to eight hours per day. The youngest individual documented was ten years old, and the oldest was 73 years.

The three most important findings of this research are:
1. 99.3% of the workers were either Muslims or belonged to a heavily subordinated community, called a “Scheduled Caste.”

2. 99.2% of workers toiled in conditions of forced labor under Indian law, which means they do not receive the state-stipulated minimum wage. In fact, most workers received between 50% and 90% less than the state-stipulated minimum wages.

3. 95.5% of workers were female.

These three facts demonstrate that home-based garment work in India is predominantly penny-wage labor conducted by minority and outcaste women and girls.

Three additional findings are of note are:

- 1) almost none of the workers (0.1%) received any sort of medical care when they suffered an injury at work;
- 2) none of the workers (0.0%) belonged to a trade union; and
- 3) none of the workers (0.0%) had a written agreement for their work. The lack of unionization and written contracts promotes the informal, shadowy nature of home-based garment work and allows many of the exploitative conditions the researchers documented to persist, particularly the severe underpayment of wages.

In addition to the aforementioned findings, the following results are of interest:


- 9.0% of workers in the north toiled in conditions that constitute forced labor under ILO Convention no. 29. No workers in the south were found to be working in conditions of forced labor under international law.

- 5.9% of workers in the north toiled in conditions that constitute bonded labor under India’s Bonded Labour (Abolition) Act, 1976. No workers in the south were found to be working in conditions of bonded labor.

- 19.1% of workers documented in the north were children between the ages of 10 and 17, as compared to 11.2% of workers documented in the south. Crucially, of these child laborers, only 33.6% in the north attended any amount of schooling each week, as compared to 91.9% of the child laborers in the south. Indeed, many of the child laborers in the north had commenced school earlier in their lives, but they were compelled to drop out when the family could no longer afford the fees. Interestingly, a leading reason given by adult female workers in the south for why they commenced home-based garment work was to earn money to pay school fees for their children. These findings on child labor represent a bare minimum estimate, as there were numerous cases in which researchers were not provided consent by a parent to interview a child whom they witnessed working along-side a mother. There were also dozens of children under the age of 10 years clearly seen by the researchers to be working alongside their mothers; however, the lower age limit approved by the Institutional Review Board for this project for interviews was 10 years. Finally, it must be noted that child labor is hardly confined to home-based garment work and can be found in many other stages of India’s garment industry – from spinning mills to urban work centers. It can of course also be found in numerous other industries across India’s informal economy.

- More than half (51.2%) of workers documented in the north began working in home-based garment work as children, whereas only 14.5% did so in the south.

- The average female worker in the north earned an eight-hour equivalent wage² of \$1.05 (\$0.13 per hour)³, versus \$1.44 (\$0.18 per hour) in the south (37% greater). Of the males documented, all were in the north, and their average eight-hour equivalent wage was \$2.37 (\$0.30 per hour), or 126% greater than their female counterparts in the north and 65% greater than female workers in the south. Most of the work being done is classified as semi-skilled work, except for thread-cutting, which is classified as unskilled



work. Minimum wages per state for an eight-hour work day range from \$3.08 (\$0.39 per hour for unskilled work in Rajasthan) to \$8.44 (\$1.05 per hour for semi-skilled work in New Delhi). However, every one of the workers documented was paid on a piece-rate basis (remuneration per piece completed). Although the arithmetic of these payments results in the chronic and severe underpayment of minimum wages for an 8-hour workday, it is possible for some individuals to work excessively long hours and thereby complete more pieces and earn more than they otherwise would with a fixed 8-hour wage and no overtime payments.

- 41.3% of workers in the north suffered a delay in wage payments of typically a few weeks to a few months. By comparison, 15.8% of workers in the south suffered wage delays, all of which were a few weeks or less.
- Only half (50.4%) of workers in the north indicated that they enjoyed the work they did, whereas almost all (98.5%) of workers in the south reported enjoying their work. One of the paradoxes on these findings is that many of the women, most Muslim workers and some Scheduled Castes, are not allowed to leave their homes, hence they report enjoying home-based garment work simply because it gives them something to do and allows them to earn income while confined inside their homes.
- Three out of four workers (76.3%) in the north began home-based garment work due to some form of duress, whereas only 15.5% of workers in the south did so. Forms of duress include family pressure, lack of any alternative way to earn sufficient income for family survival, or severe financial hardship. For many of the workers, lacking an alternative is related to the prohibition on leaving their homes. To that end, almost three-fourths (73.4%) of workers in the north report that they would rather leave home-based garment work but are unable to do so, whereas only 16.1% of workers in the south wish to leave home-based work but feel unable to do so. One of the primary reasons home-based workers cite for not being able to leave the work is the threat by subcontractors that they would never receive any other work again.
- Few workers – 8.9% in the north and 15.2% in the south

– reported having alternate sources of income to home-based garment. This fact is especially important since home-based garment work is seasonal work (not performed during the monsoons), which means that during this time most workers are unable to earn income. The lack of income generation for months at a time places additional financial strain on a family unit, including the inability to pay for school fees for children.

- The average family size in the north that was documented for this project was 5.8 members, as compared 4.0 members in the south. The difference in family size is the primary reason for the significant variance between average daily income per household member in the north (\$1.04) versus the south (\$2.48). This substantial per capita income difference has numerous implications for the overall wellbeing of a family unit, including the ability of children to attend school full-time, as opposed to work.
- 29.9% of workers in the north reported facing a penalty if they did not complete their work in the timeframe directed by the contractor, versus 13.9% of workers in the south. The most common penalty levied against the workers was the refusal to pay her for the piece, which in the case of items that take two or three days to complete means the worker goes unpaid for several days of work. Some workers also faced penalties (wage deductions) for errors in the work performed. While very few of these cases were categorized as forced labor under ILO Convention no. 29 due to the absence of other clear indicators of forced labor (verbal or physical abuse, restrictions on alternate employment, etc.), the penalty of not being paid for a few days of work in a week when wages are already so severely depressed has grave consequences on the workers and their families, in particular added pressure for children to contribute to family income.
- A little more than half (52.6%) of workers in the north reported being free to pursue other work, as compared to 88.8% of workers in the south. This particular metric can be difficult to scrutinize, as workers often articulate the theoretical freedom to pursue other work, while simultaneously indicating that they are prohibited from leaving their homes, or that there are no alternatives work options for them.



Almost all of the individuals documented in this project were working on garments bound for export to major brands in the United States and the European Union.

- 29.2% of workers in the north reported working with chronic ailments or injuries, whereas only 2.7% of workers in the south did so. Home-based garment work involves spending extended hours hunched over, in dusty or low-light conditions, performing repetitive manual tasks. As such, common injuries include back pain, eye strain or diminishing eye sight, and body aches. Working environments in the south that the researchers visited tended to be cleaner and less cramped than in the north, and workers in the south also tended to be a few years younger and worked about 45 fewer minutes per day on average than did workers in the north.

- Literacy rates mark one of the sharpest differences between north (27.4%) and south (97.0%). Literacy rates in general in southern India are considerably greater than in the north, hence these results are not surprising. That said, literacy plays a vital role in whether or not individuals are able to keep records of their work (18.4% in the north versus 84.2% in the south). Keeping records allows an individual to track wage payments, which helps empower workers to ensure they are not being underpaid. Literacy is also crucial for individuals to read and understand the terms of a written agreement for work, should they ever exist in India's home-based garment sector. While it is impossible to know for sure, it is probable that the higher levels of literacy in the south are to some extent responsible for the higher wages the workers receive (still well below minimum wage), as well as higher rates of having a bank account (46.7% in the north versus 66.7% in the south).

- Finally, very few workers in north (8.6%) or south (14.2%) felt they earned enough to lead a decent life. This is not a surprising result given the anemic wage payments in the sector. What is of note is that even workers in the

south who earn 30% or 50% more than their counterparts in the north feel that they still do not earn enough to lead a decent life. The wages were simply not sufficient. This fact leads to the obvious result that few workers are able to save money (79% in the north; 13.3% in the south). Savings are crucial for withstanding income shocks, family catastrophe, and being able to afford school fees.

It bears repeating, that almost all of the individuals documented in this project were working on garments bound for export to major brands in the United States and the European Union. These retailers and their shareholders enjoy robust profits, while consumers enjoy inexpensive clothing at least in part due to the penny-wage and exploitative conditions endured by the women and girls in India's home-based garment sector. That said, ensuring decent wages for home-based garment workers would have at most a minor impact on the profit margins of most apparel retailers, so there is little excuse not to do so. The findings in this report are solely intended to help brands and other stakeholders pursue new initiatives to improve the lives of these home-based workers, and the recommendations for doing so can be found in section 8 at the end of the report. The results will hopefully also demonstrate that rigorous, firsthand data gathering of forced labor and child labor in a commodity's supply chain can and should be conducted across dozens of commodities around the world. Doing so promises to provide the knowledge required to tackle human bondage, clean global supply chains, and alleviate much of the suffering endured by hundreds of millions of workers who toil as the exploitable and expendable underclass of the global economy.



“I never receive my payment on time. I have to cry to get payment from the contractor.” – A 23-YEAR-OLD GARMENT WORKER NEAR BAREILLY

II. OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH

A. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research project was undertaken through the Blum Center for Developing Economies at the University of California, Berkeley. The Principal Investigator (PI) was Siddharth Kara.

The primary aim of this project was to survey the working conditions in India's home-based garment sector. The second aim was to establish prevalence rates of various forms of labor exploitation, such as forced labor, bonded labor, and child labor.

India's garment and textile embellishment sectors are anecdotally known to be plagued by various forms of labor abuses; however, there has yet to be a statistically robust, broad-based research initiative that documents the nature, scale, and modalities of labor exploitation in the homemaker segment of India's garment sector. This research is crucial in order to address the abuses effectively. Although brands are increasingly sensitive to labor abuses in their supply chains, there remains a lack of knowledge as to how and to what extent their supply chains could be tainted. Baseline research is required to fill this knowledge gap and to inform ameliorative actions by industry and governments.

B. INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD (IRB)

Because the research involved interaction with human subjects, Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was secured in advance of any field research being conducted. Extensive documentation of the research objectives, methodology, procedures, and questionnaires was submitted to the IRB at the University of California, Berkeley. In order to ensure safety for all potential interviewees, rigorous procedures were followed to

protect all confidential information and personal identifying information throughout the research process.

C. SOURCES OF DATA


To obtain information on labor exploitation in the home-based segment of India's garment sector, both primary sources and secondary data were used. Qualitative and quantitative data were collected through individual interviews with laborers inside their homes. Semi-structured interview questionnaires were used for discussion with key informants to gather information on the nature of their work in the garment sector. Secondary information was obtained from a review of existing literature as well as relevant law and conventions relating to child labor, forced labor, and bonded labor. A list of these resources can be found in the Sources Cited.

D. DATA MANAGEMENT

Interviews were conducted with the utmost attention to security and confidentiality. Researchers conducted the initial data collection by recording survey responses with pen on paper. There was no use of video recording or audio recording. Surveys were then typed and uploaded to a secure UC Berkeley server, after consulting with the Berkeley security team about best practices for physical and electronic safeguards. All electronic data are stored on encrypted disks and original handwritten surveys are kept in a locked cabinet in the Blum Center at UC Berkeley. The PI alone reviewed all checklists individually and entered key information into a spreadsheet for further analysis.

E. THE RESEARCHERS

A total of nine local researchers were hired to conduct field research in India. Six of the researchers were female, and three were male. All of the researchers were Hindus. The individuals who conducted research in the north were



fluent Hindi speakers, and those who conducted research in the south were fluent Tamil speakers. All researchers had experience conducting labor exploitation research in rural settings, and were familiar with the nature of India's garment sector. For their protection, the identities of the field researchers are kept confidential. The researchers were trained and briefed on all conditions of the IRB for human subject research prior to research being conducted. Some of the procedures that the researchers were required to follow include:

- Obtaining and documenting consent to speak with the interviewee prior to conducting any discussions;
- In the case of minors, obtaining and documenting consent from adults who were responsible for the minor, as well as obtaining and documenting assent from the minor, prior to conducting any discussions;
- Interviewee names were never documented; each subject was identified numerically by the order in which they were interviewed at a specific site on a specific day;
- No photographs, audio recordings, or video recordings were taken of any of the interviewees;
- No payments were allowed for interviews, but a small amount of food or beverage during the conversation was permitted.

Researchers were asked to memorize the questionnaire as best they could and conduct interviews casually, rather than following a formal list of questions. Researchers were allowed to take notes during their conversations with the subjects, which they later used to fill out the checklists for each subject they documented. If consent was not provided, the individual was not interviewed. If at any point during the conversation the subject asked not to continue, the conversation was terminated immediately. Only fully documented cases have been included in the results presented in this report.

F. PHASES OF THE RESEARCH

The research was carried out in four phases. Phase one was a pilot stage, followed by three phases of full research. The aggregate pilot and research period spanned October 3, 2017 to April 18, 2018.

During the pilot stage, a team of two researchers was

tasked with testing the questionnaire and interview process in target homeworker areas in the state of Uttar Pradesh. The purpose of the pilot stage was to learn whether there were any deficiencies in the data gathering process.

The remaining three research phases involved all the researchers. There were break periods between each phase during which the PI analyzed the results and refined site selection.

G. SITE SELECTION

In conjunction with local experts, the PI mapped the regions throughout India with a high rate of home-based garment work for export production, which the researchers focused on for this study. The study was conducted in urban, peri-urban, and rural areas in northern India within 50 kilometers of the following cities: New Delhi, Jaipur, Shahjahanpur, Meerut, Bareilly, Sikandrabad, Farrukhabad, and Hapur. In southern India, the study was in urban, peri-urban, and rural areas within 30 kilometers of Tiruppur and Pollachi.

Due to the hidden nature of labor exploitation in India's home-based garment sector, it is necessary to use non-probabilistic sampling techniques to gain access to study participants through trusted networks, and to recruit a sufficient sample size to draw generalizable and actionable results. The study utilized a purposive network and snowball sampling to identify survey participants. Key interviews were identified and recruited through the following mechanisms:

1. Informal discussions with community members living in areas where home-based garment work for export was known to take place;
2. Snowball sampling, which occurred if a key informant recommended interviewing other individuals as part of the study. If a key informant shared possible subjects to include in the research, the researchers would then include the prospective individual on a list of individuals to approach for a potential interview;

To ensure that researchers correctly identified informants doing work for the export market, they were provided intensive training sessions in classroom and field-based



work. During the classroom sessions, researchers were shown videos and pictures of export garments and the type of processes that are usually outsourced for export work. The field-based work involved going into production areas and classifying garments between domestic and export-bound work. This training lasted approximately one month.

The researchers approached a random sample of households in the mapped area known for export work, then went through their checklist to ensure that the work being done by a prospective informant was indeed for the export market, as opposed to the domestic market in India. To do so, several cues were confirmed by the researchers before proceeding. First, garments for export to the West (t-shirts, dresses, bridesmaid dresses, scarves, skirts, shirts) tend to be considerably different than those for domestic production (sarees, salwar suits, Indian bridal wear). Second, export work tends to be done in larger quantities, hence clusters of workers in which a large number of the same garments were being produced was another strong cue that the work was for export. Third, the workmanship for export garments is visually superior to that of domestic garments, especially in design and finishing quality. Finally, the raw materials being used for garments for export are of better quality than for domestic production. In cases where an individual was involved in home-based garment work but was not working on a garment at the time the researchers arrived, they were asked to show other pieces they had worked on recently, to ensure they were for export. Many workers were also cognizant of the fact that their work was for export. Finally, conversations with sub-contractors, when possible, helped the researchers further confirm the work being done was for export.

Approximately 85% of the informants for this project were definitively determined to be working for the export market only, and the remaining 15% worked on a mix of export and domestic production.

Once export work was confirmed, the researchers first read an IRB-approved script that described the nature and purpose of the research, the policies for protecting confidentiality, and other key information prior to asking

for consent. If prospective participants were interested in participating and did not exhibit exclusion criteria (see below), informed consent/assent was documented. In no circumstances were minor children interviewed alone. In all cases, researchers emphasized that there was no compensation or direct benefits to the participants and no penalty for non-participation or withdrawal. Upon completion of the interview, participants were invited to refer the researchers to other potential participants. The researchers again emphasized that such referral was voluntary, confidential, and a referral or non-referral would not result in any form of compensation, benefit, or penalty.

H. INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Inclusion criteria include the following:

- 1) working full-time or part-time in the home-based garment sector in India;
- 2) no cognitive impairments;
- 3) fluent in Hindi.

Exclusion criteria include any of the following:

- 1) an age of less than ten years;
- 2) non-fluency in Hindi;
- 3) cognitive impairment that would prevent the worker's participation in the study; or
- 4) inability to give consent or assent; or
- 5) not presently working part-time or full-time in the home-based garment sector (by self-report).

I. DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

The researchers encountered a handful of challenges during the course of the research project, though none of them would be considered severe.

Venturing into rural areas in India was at times exhausting, involving travel down bumpy dirt roads, followed by hiking on foot. In certain areas, home-based garment work is more secretive than in others, so gaining access to potential informants took a great deal of time and still often resulted in a lack of access to workers or consent to interview them. Researchers were also often not given consent or assent to speak with child laborers. None of the researchers endured verbal or physical assault by contractors or other individuals who might be concerned about the nature of the research.



“My parents could not afford fees for school, so I do this work instead.”

– A 13-YEAR-OLD GARMENT WORKER NEAR SIKANDRABAD

III. OVERVIEW OF THE GARMENT SECTOR IN INDIA

A. HISTORY AND MARKET SIZE

The Indian textile and garment industry dates back to ancient times with the cultivation of cotton in the Indus Valley beginning approximately 3000 BCE. Royalty and other political elite controlled the textile industry in the early days, which was divided into two sectors — textiles for the common people and those made for royalty and trade with the upper classes. Textile production continued to flourish during Muslim rule in India from approximately 1200 to 1760, after which the East India Trading Company gained greater economic dominance across the subcontinent, followed by the British Raj in 1858. Prior to colonization by the British, the combination of skilled artisans and an abundance of raw materials across the Indian subcontinent stimulated an extensive trading network spanning Africa, the Middle East, Southeast Asia, to eventually into the West. Various regions became known for different products — Dacca for fine muslins, Kasimbazar for silk goods, and several cities across western and central India for detailed embroidery.⁴

The East India Trading Company first established settlements for textile production during the first half the 18th century, at which point it began to centralize organization of the sector and standardize manufacturing processes. In so doing, the company transitioned from importing finished textiles from India towards importing raw materials, primarily cotton. Although large scale textile mills, power looms, and weaving mills emerged in parts of India during the late 19th century onward, Britain halted robust industrialization and technological advances in the Indian garment sector in order to protect domestic commercial interests. In that way, India served primarily as a source of cheap labor and raw materials for

British textile manufacturers for almost two centuries.⁵

The ready-made-garment sector in India developed really only after independence from the British in 1947. Post-independence, the Indian garment sector transitioned from the trade in raw fibers to finished apparel, buoyed by the demand for low-cost garments from the West. Worries once again about protecting their domestic production bases, Western powers established the Multi Fiber Arrangement (MFA) in 1974, which placed strict quotas on textile and apparel imports from low-income countries into Western markets. When the MFA expired in 2005, textile powerhouses, such as India and China, made significant inroads into U.S. and EU markets.⁶

The Indian textile and garment industry today is the second largest manufacturer and exporter in the world after China. India's textile and garment industry contributes 2% of Indian GDP, 10% of total manufacturing processes, and 14% of all industrial production.⁷

The share of textile and garments of India's total exports was 12.4% in 2017, and India has a share of 5% of the global trade in textiles and apparel. Nearly half (48%) of these exports are ready-made garments. The ready-made garment sector directly employs 12.9 million people; estimates of the number of home-based workers in the industry remain opaque. The total size of India's textile and apparel market in 2017 was approximately \$150 billion and is expected to grow to \$223 billion by 2021.⁸

The primary destinations of India's textile and garment exports are the United States and the European Union, which receive almost half (47%) of the country's total textile and apparel exports.⁹ In 2016, the United States stood as India's top export destination for textiles and garments, followed by United Arab Emirates and the

United Kingdom.¹⁰ Table 2 illustrates that the textile and apparel industry in India has grown impressively across the past five years. Indeed, U.S. garment imports from India increased by approximately 24% during this period (second only to Vietnam), with a declared import value of nearly \$8 billion in 2016.¹¹

Although China remains a dominant force in the textile and apparel sector, Table 2 illustrates that U.S. imports from China actually decreased by 75% in 2015-2016, while India's import value remained constant and Vietnam's grew by 1.9%. Other data confirm the trend in shifting apparel imports from China to India and Southeast Asia, as U.S. retail companies eschew increasing production costs in China.¹²

Table 3 illustrates the top import countries for textile and garments in the European Union. Growth across these top buyers has been steady for the last five years, with the United Kingdom being the top importer of Indian garments in the EU at \$2.2 billion.

In 2014, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the "Make in India" campaign, covering 25 sectors, including the textile and garment industry, to amplify India's participation as a leading manufacturing hub. Several U.S. and EU companies have invested in India since the campaign commenced, including textile machinery manufacturers Rieter and Trutzschler and apparel retailers like Zara and Mango (Spain), Promod (France), Benetton (Italy), and Esprit, Levi's, and Forever 21 (United States).¹³

**Table 2 - Textiles & Apparel U.S. Imports
\$ millions**

Country	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	% of Total (2016)	2012-2016 Growth Rate	2015-2016 Growth Rate
China	45,061	46,467	47,220	48,892	45,221	37.6%	0%	-7.5%
Vietnam	7,519	8,604	9,822	11,152	11,372	9.5%	51%	2.0%
India	6,420	6,902	7,383	7,951	7,952	6.6%	24%	0.0%
Mexico	5,784	5,830	5,976	5,902	5,806	4.8%	0%	-1.6%
Bangladesh	4,675	5,157	5,052	5,658	5,548	4.6%	19%	-1.9%
All Others	44,402	45,043	46,235	46,991	44,412	37.0%	0%	-5.5%
TOTAL	113,661	118,003	121,668	126,546	120,331	100%	6%	-4.9%

Source: Data from Official Statistics of the U.S. Department of Commerce

**Table 3 - Top EU Countries with Textile and Garment Imports from India
\$ millions**

Country	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2012-2016 Growth Rate	2015-2016 Growth Rate
United Kingdom	2,076	2,390	2,485	2,406	2,232	8%	-7.2%
Germany	1,561	1,913	1,901	1,697	1,708	9%	0.6%
France	825	1,036	1,125	1,022	1,023	24%	0.1%
Spain	729	872	900	922	998	37%	8.2%
Italy	771	919	903	777	793	3%	2.1%

Source: Data compiled from World Integrated Solutions Database



Embellishment



Hand Embroidery



Knotting/Tasseling



Lace Work



Sequin Work



Zari



Bead Work



Thread Work



Buttons



Fringing



Bead Linking



Crochet

B. Nature of Home-Based Garment Work

The equipment required to perform home-based garment work includes a wooden frame on which fabrics are placed, along with scissors, needles, and pliers. In addition, design-specific materials include beads, threads, and laces. The types of home-based garment work performed by the workers documented for this project are pictured above. In addition, simple thread-cutting is a common form of home-based work.

C. Hazards Faced by Home-Based Garment Workers

Home-based garment work is monotonous, tedious, and

often performed in cramped, dark, dusty environments with limited ventilation. Home-based garment workers suffer many health ailments, including:

- Ocular degeneration or near complete loss of vision
- Chronic back pain
- Muscle pain and atrophy
- Headaches
- Pulmonary issues
- Cuts and infections

The health and development impact on child laborers is naturally more pronounced.



“We are slaves to the contractors. They give us less wages, but we have no alternative.” – A 30-YEAR-OLD GARMENT WORKER NEAR NEW DELHI

IV. PREVIOUS STUDIES OF INDIA'S GARMENT SECTOR

A survey of the existing scholarly literature on India's garment industry reveals the following key findings: Overall, there are more males (60%) than females (40%) in India's garment sector, however, home-based garment work in India is disproportionately female. Further, the proportion of female workers has been steadily increasing across the last ten years.¹⁴ By contrast, the share of female workers in the garment, textile, and footwear industries across Southeast Asia range from nearly three-fifths in Indonesia to about four-fifths in Cambodia.¹⁵

In a 2015 report, the ILO examined the causes for labor shortages and labor turnover in the garment sector. Quantitative surveys of garment factory workers in sites in northern India and in Bangalore in the south included questions regarding indicators of forced labor; however, the researchers did not attempt to quantify the prevalence of forced labor in the factory settings they documented. They did, however, uncover numerous indicators of forced labor, including verbal abuse by factory managers, unpaid overtime, and being compelled to work when unwell. The report concluded that the data demonstrate that conditions at garment factories often involved a culture of gross mistreatment of workers that point to probable forced labor.¹⁶

In 2015, Save the Children conducted a research study to estimate the number of children working in the garment sector in five districts in New Delhi and to better understand living and working conditions of child laborers. The researchers concluded that 8,044 children in these five districts were working as home-based garment workers; however, they noted the number could be much higher given difficulties in accessing households

and the reluctance of interviewees to discuss child labor. The report notes that a primary reason why child labor persists in the garment supply chain is due to the financial pressure for children to supplement household income. The report also notes that child laborers in the garment sector live and work in hazardous conditions, with poor lighting and ventilation. Children complain of back pain, poor or failing eye sight, and having to work long hours. Astoundingly, 36% of the children documented by the researchers indicated that they were paid nothing for their work.¹⁷

A 2015 study conducted by the India Committee of the Netherlands and the Stop Child Labor Coalition examined the situation of child labor at hybrid cottonseed farms in six Indian states. Researchers collected and analyzed primary data collected via field visits to 396 sample cottonseed farms in 72 villages. The report indicates that roughly 200,000 children, mostly girls under 14 years old, were working to produce cottonseed that is the basis of textile products and garments. The study also noted that most children working on farms became full-time workers because they were compelled to drop out of school. Minimum wages were regularly underpaid, and the children were exposed to poisonous pesticides and were often trafficked.¹⁸

A number of reports have been conducted by the India Committee of the Netherlands in conjunction with the Centre for Research on Multinational Corporations (SOMO), highlighting the labor abuses experienced by young female migrants in India's garment industry. A 2012 study documents the living and working conditions in spinning units of five Indian textile and garment enterprises traced to supply chains of U.S. and European apparel companies. Researchers found cases of forced and bonded labor, as recruiters convinced parents in rural

Researchers found that child labor is highly prevalent in the embroidery and embellishment stages of apparel making as part of home-based work.

villages to send their daughters to spinning mills with promises of a decent salary, accommodations, meals, and opportunities for schooling. However, when the girls arrived at the mill they were forced to live in cramped hostels located on the factory grounds, were prohibited from leaving the factory grounds, and were not allowed to contact their families. In addition, working conditions were found to be mentally and physically abusive — the girls worked 60 or more hours each week, with mandatory but unpaid overtime and night shifts. The report also showed that workers rarely signed written contracts. Among all workers interviewed for the research, 60% were under 18 years old when employed at the spinning mill.¹⁹

Two other studies by the India Committee of the Netherlands focused on the trend of young female migrant workers in Bangalore's garment industry. These migrants cited poverty and a lack of job opportunities as the primary forces pushing them to migrate for work. Many young female workers noted that their parents had no regular job or reliable source of income, hence they needed to assist the family with earning income. Since migrant workers from northern India do not speak or understand Kannada, the local language in Bangalore, they are unable to communicate needs for assistance with outsiders, nor can they communicate concerns or needs with fellow factory workers, managers, and security guards at their factories. Geographic and linguistic isolation create the conditions for unchecked exploitation.^{20,21}

A 2011 report conducted by the India Committee of the Netherlands and SOMO found that recruiters for migrant garment worker primarily target unmarried girls and women between the ages of 14 and 25, who are dalits or

belong to a lower caste community. The recruiters also target girls and women from poor, landless and indebted families. In particular, the report revealed that many workers were employed under the "Sumangali Scheme," in which workers are recruited with promises of being paid decent wages after completing three to five years of factory work. However, the scheme essentially devolves into debt bondage as the workers remain unpaid for longer periods of time, as wages are often deducted for living expenses and other reasons. In addition, researchers found that workers were severely restricted in their freedom of movement.²²

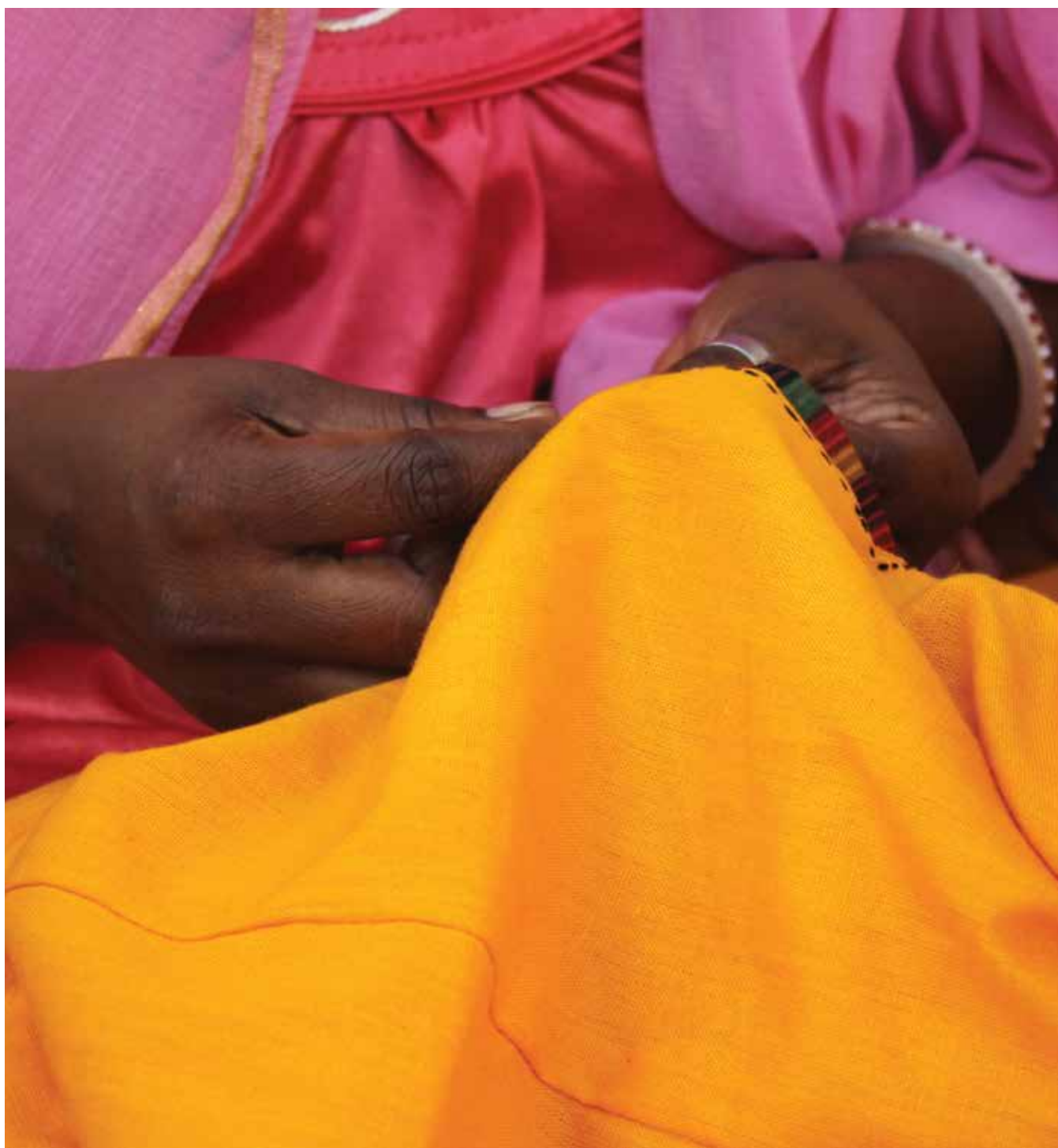
Bhaskaran and Upendranadh's research is one of the few reports that exclusively studies the role of children in home-based work in India's garment sector, but only in and around New Delhi. In this context, the researchers found that child labor is highly prevalent in the embroidery and embellishment stages of apparel making as part of home-based work. The study does not provide a prevalence estimate of child labor, however it does examine many of the broader contextual questions regarding the persistence of child labor in home-based garment work, and it provides recommendations on how to address these issues.²³

A 2002 UNICEF-sponsored working paper examined the prevalence of home-based child labor in various sectors including garments, in five low-income and middle-income Asian countries (India, Pakistan, Indonesia, Philippines, and Thailand). In India, the garment study was conducted in the Lucknow district of Uttar Pradesh with a sample of 603 households. Findings include that 21% of children age five to ten years were involved in home-based garment work, and 71% of children age 11 to 14 were involved. More than half of all children who were working were either not in school or in school part-time. Hours worked each day range from four to seven, depending on age and gender of the child. Approximately 18% of children suffer health ailments directly attributable to the home-based work they perform.²⁴

Finally, WIEGO's (Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing) Informal Economy Monitoring Study was conducted in ten cities in Latin

America, Asia, and Africa and examined how workers are responding to evolving economic and social forces. Of the total sample of home-based workers across the three study cities, 71% were sub-contracted and 29% were self-employed. Researchers found that both self-employed and sub-contracted home-based workers are heavily affected by macroeconomic trends, such as fluctuations in product

demand and prices. The study also found that home-based workers are especially impacted by the lack of basic infrastructure services (i.e., electricity) as their home is their work space. Home-based workers are also prone to unpredictable value chains, including irregular supply of raw materials, delayed payments, and irregular purchase orders.²⁵





“I do not enjoy this work. I do it because I have no alternative. There is no other work to do in this village” – A 28-YEAR-OLD GARMENT WORKER NEAR FARRUKHABAD

V. DISCUSSION OF RELEVANT LAW

The following section details the relevant law and conventions that establish each form of severe labor exploitation documented during this research project.

A. Forced Labor Under Indian Law

The Constitution of India, Article 23 includes a prohibition against traffic in human beings and forced labor. While the Constitution of India does not define forced labor, the Supreme Court of India has provided specific guidance on the definition of forced labor for the country:

In the case of *People's Union for Democratic Rights vs. Union of India and Others*, 1982, the Supreme Court of India determined that forced labor should be defined as any labor for which the worker receives less than the government-stipulated minimum wage. The Court reasoned that:

*Ordinarily no one would willingly supply labor or service to another for less than the minimum wage. . . [unless] he is acting under the force of some compulsion which drives him to work though he is paid less than what he is entitled under law to receive*²⁶

The researchers asked three questions that focused on verifying a chronic underpayment of minimum wages as well as chronic delays in wage payments in order to establish forced labor under Indian law.

B. Forced Labor Under ILO Convention no. 29

ILO Forced Labor Convention no. 29, of which India is a signatory, defines forced labor as, “Work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty

and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.”

The elements required to establish forced labor under the Convention are that the labor must be both:

- 1) Involuntary, and
- 2) Coerced.

The Convention does not define these conditions, but subsequent scholarship has maintained that absences of freedom of movement and freedom of employment are central to the concept of forced labor. Naturally, there are degrees of involuntariness and coercion, so an array of questions must be asked in order to establish whether the conditions pass a threshold to establish forced labor.

The researchers asked 11 questions in order to establish the conditions for involuntariness under ILO Convention no. 29. The questions focused on establishing unlawful restrictions on movement and employment. Additional questions were asked to establish an excessive work schedule, unpaid overtime, lack of safety equipment and meals, lack of medical care in case of injury, and other conditions that reveal involuntariness of labor.

The researchers asked six questions in order to establish the conditions for coercion under the Convention. These questions focused on threats, punishments, confiscation of documents, excessive surveillance, and other factors that demonstrated coercion of labor.

Only if both conditions of involuntariness and coercion were simultaneously established was a subject deemed to be a victim of forced labor under ILO Convention no. 29.

C. Bonded Labor

Bonded labor under Indian law is defined in the Bonded

The Constitution of India, Article 23 includes a prohibition against traffic in human beings and forced labor. In the case of *People’s Union for Democratic Rights vs. Union of India and Others*, 1982, the Supreme Court of India determined that forced labor should be defined as any labor for which the worker receives less than the government-stipulated minimum wage.

Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976:

*Bonded labor is defined as a system of forced or partly forced labor under which a debtor accepts an advance of cash or in-kind in exchange for a pledge of his or any family member’s or other dependent’s labor or service to, or for the benefit of, the creditor. The agreement can be oral or in writing or some mix therein; of a fixed duration of time, or not; and with or without wages paid. An individual born into such an agreement made by an ascendant is included, and any forfeiture of the freedom of movement, employment, or the right to sell any product of the labor during the agreement at market value constitutes bonded labor.*²⁷

Under this definition, bonded labor is established if an individual takes an advance in exchange for his or any dependent’s pledged labor or service and is confined to a specific geographic area, or cannot work for someone else, or is not allowed to sell his labor or goods at market value. The researchers asked six questions in order to establish the conditions for bonded labor under the Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976. Questions focused on whether an advance had been taken in exchange for pledged labor, and whether any wage deductions were made pursuant to repayment of the debt. These “deductions” could also be made for the provision of food or supplies, errors committed during the work, or for tenancy. Deductions could also take the form of coercion of other family member to work to repay the debt, as well as excessive interest rates that are used to perpetuate a worker’s state of indebtedness.

D. Child Labor

The Constitution of India, Article 24 includes a prohibition against the employment of children in factories and other hazardous settings. India has ratified most of the major international conventions regarding child labor listed in Table 4.

Ratification of International Child Labor Laws – India²⁸

Table 4 – Ratification of International Child Labor Laws – India

Convention	Ratification
ILO C. 138 Minimum Age	✓
ILO C. 182 Worst Forms of Child Labor	✓
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on Armed Conflict	✓
UN CRC Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography	✓
Palermo Protocol on Trafficking in Persons	✓

More recently, the Government of India ratified both ILO Convention no. 182 (Worst Forms of Child Labor) and no. 138 (Minimum Age) in March 2017. Under international law, the ILO Convention Concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment or Work no. 138 stipulates

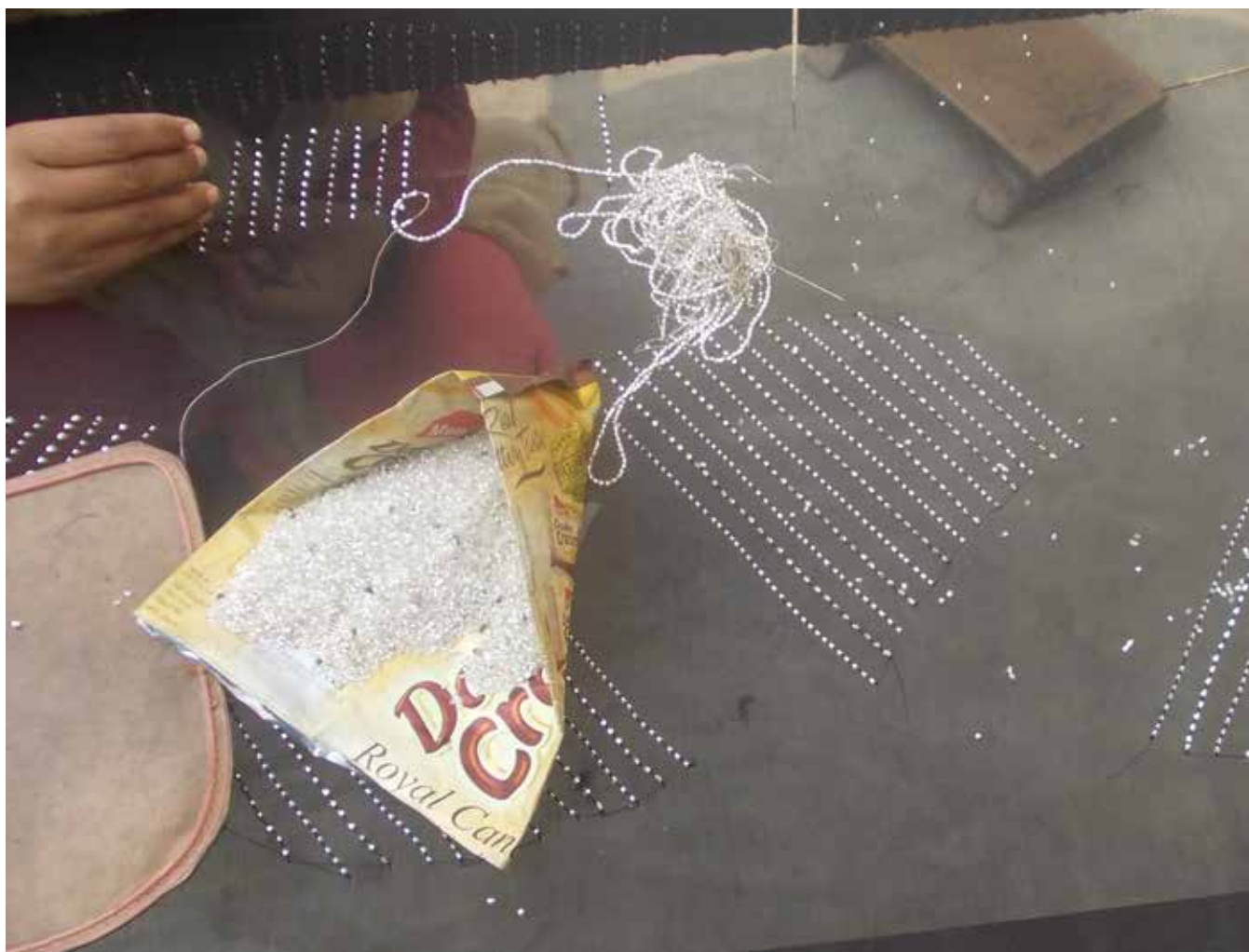
that hazardous work should not commence until 18 years, including in developing nations. The minimum age for non-hazardous work is set at 15 years, 14 years in developing nations. The ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention no. 182 stipulates that a child is any person less than 18 years. Worst forms of child labor include slavery, trafficking, or any work that “is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children.”

The Child Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986 defines a child as being 14 years of age. Section 3 of the Act includes the prohibition against child labor in certain hazardous occupations (listed in Part B of the Act, number 51 includes “Zari” and similar processes). Section 7 of the Act includes, inter alia, the prohibition of child labor of any kind for greater than six hours per day.

However, under a 2016 amendment, the 1986 Child

Labour (Prohibition and Regulatory) Act (with a new title, “The Child and Adolescent Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 1986”) allows children to help his or her family or family enterprise, as long as the work conditions are not hazardous, and the work does not interfere with schooling. A “family enterprise” is defined as “...any work, profession, manufacture or business which is performed by the members of the family with the engagement of other persons” (Article 3b). The Act has been criticized for in essence legalizing many forms of child labor, potentially including home-based garment work.

The researchers established child labor in home-based garment work by documenting any child who self-reported or was reported by an adult to be fewer than 18 years of age and working at least four hours per day at least five days a week.





“We cannot leave this work even though we are treated so badly. If we leave this work, the company will never give us work again.” – A 36-year-old GARMENT WORKER NEAR JAIPUR

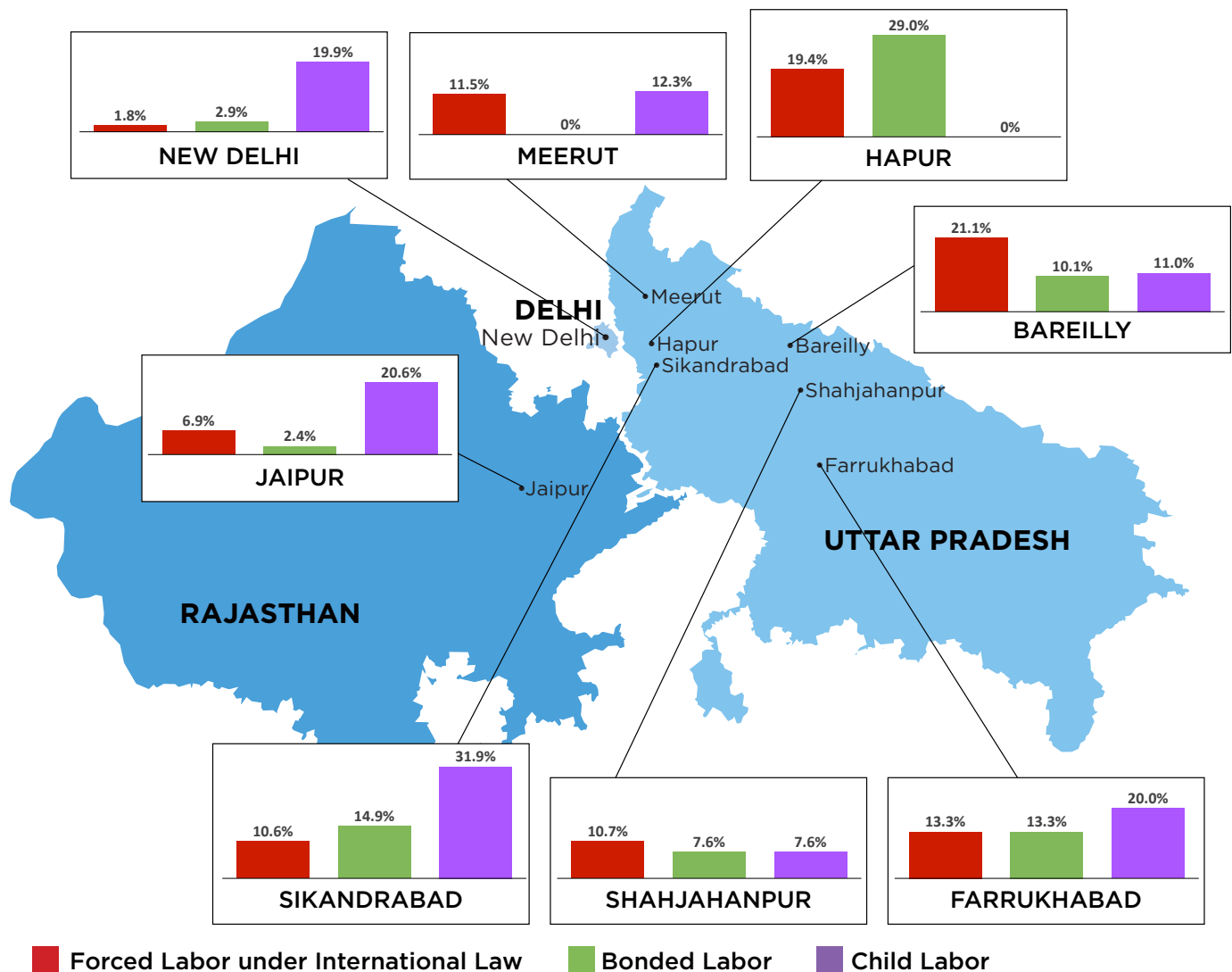
VI. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS BY CITY

A. Cases Documented – Northern India

A total of 1,122 cases were documented in northern India within 50 kilometers of the following cities: New Delhi,

Jaipur, Shahjahanpur, Meerut, Bareilly, Sikandrabad, Farrukhabad, and Hapur. Map 1 provides a pictorial representation of the spread of cases documented across northern India. Percentages on forced labor under Indian law are not included as they are all either 100% or close to it in every city documented.

MAP 1: Cases Documented in Northern India



1. NEW DELHI

Total cases documented	342
Forced labor under Indian law	100.0%
Forced labor under International law	1.8%
Bonded labor	2.9%
Child labor	19.9%
Child laborers who attend school	47.1%
Average 8-hour wage	\$1.15
Male	\$1.71
Female	\$1.13
Wages delayed	24.3%
Average daily hours worked	6.3
Female	97.1%
Like the work	53.5%
Began work from a form of duress	74.9%
Began as a minor	40.9%
Have another source of income	13.7%
Average years worked	6.3
Average family size	5.7
Average income per HH member	\$1.04
Muslim or Scheduled Caste	99.4%
Would rather leave but cannot	79.8%
Penalized if work unfinished on time	14.9%
Free to do other work	76.0%
Chronic physical ailment or injury	30.4%
Literate	28.9%
Keep records of their work	17.3%
Feel earn enough for a decent life	4.4%
Have a bank account	49.1%
Able to save income	7.6%
Receive medical care	0%
Belong to a trade union	0%
Have a written agreement for work	0%

All workers were found to be receiving less than the government stipulated minimum wages; males earned an average eight-hour equivalent wage of \$1.71 per workday (\$0.21 per hour) and females earned an average eight-hour equivalent wage of \$1.13 per workday (\$0.14 per hour).

New Delhi is the capital of India with a population of 22 million people. Researchers documented 342 home-based garment workers in and around greater New Delhi. The workers were found in a mix of urban areas working in small, concrete homes; in and around urban slums; or in village-like environs beyond the city limits. All workers were found to be receiving less than the government stipulated minimum wages; males earned an average eight-hour equivalent wage of \$1.71 per workday (\$0.21 per hour) and females earned an average eight-hour equivalent wage of \$1.13 per workday (\$0.14 per hour). Various minimum wages apply to these cases depending on whether the worker lives in New Delhi, or in the outskirts of the city in the state of Haryana, and also whether the work is categorized as unskilled (thread-cutting) or semi-skilled. The relevant daily minimum wages are:

New Delhi

Unskilled - \$7.66 (\$0.96 per hour)

Semi-skilled - \$8.44 (\$1.06 per hour)

Haryana

Unskilled - \$4.74 (\$0.59 per hour)

Semi-skilled - \$5.23 (\$0.65 per hour)

The workers in New Delhi are woefully underpaid, to the tune of 60% to 80% below the appropriate minimum wages.


Forced labor under international law (1.8%) and bonded labor (2.9%) were not found to be extensive problems; however, child labor (19.9%) was documented in roughly one out of five cases. Not quite half (47.1%) of these child laborers attend any amount of schooling each week.

Delays in wage payments (24.3%) were significant but lower than most other cities in northern India. Almost all workers (97.1%) were female. A little more than half of the workers (53.5%) indicated that they liked doing home-based garment work. Three out of four workers (74.9%) indicated that they began home-based garment work due to some form of duress, and four in ten workers (40.9%) began doing home-based garment work as children. New Delhi, along with Jaipur, is the only city in northern India in which a small proportion of workers (13.7%) indicated that they had an alternate source of income to home-based garment work. Average income per household member was \$1.04, close to the average of other cities in the north.

Almost eight out of ten workers (79.8%) indicated they would rather leave home-based garment work but were unable to do so. That said, New Delhi also had the highest proportion of workers (76.0%) in northern India who indicated they were free to pursue other work. Digging deeper, this paradox can be explained by workers articulating the theoretical freedom to pursue other work, even though there was no other work or alternatives for them to pursue. A relatively small proportion of workers (14.9%) indicated they suffered a penalty if they did not complete their work on time. Three in ten workers (30.4%) toiled while enduring a chronic health ailment or injury. Only 28.9% of the workers documented in and around New Delhi were literate, and even fewer (17.3%) kept records of their work. Almost none of the workers (4.4%) felt they earned enough to lead a decent life. Finally, around half of the workers (49.1%) had a bank account, though only 7.6% were able to save any income. Most of the bank accounts had a zero balance.

2. Jaipur

Total cases documented	248
Forced labor under Indian law	95.2%
Forced labor under International law	6.9%
Bonded labor	2.4%
Child labor	20.6%
Child laborers who attend school	31.4%
Average 8-hour wage	\$1.13
Male	\$3.48
Female	\$0.90
Wages delayed	53.6%
Average daily hours worked	6.2
Female	90.3%
Like the work	57.7%
Began work from a form of duress	69.0%
Began as a minor	33.9%
Have another source of income	15.3%
Average years worked	4.4
Average family size	5.3
Average income per HH member	\$1.16
Muslim or Scheduled Caste	99.2%
Would rather leave but cannot	59.3%
Penalized if work unfinished on time	19.8%
Free to do other work	26.6%
Chronic physical ailment or injury	28.2%
Literate	30.6%
Keep records of their work	24.2%
Feel earn enough for a decent life	5.2%
Have a bank account	29.8%
Able to save income	6.9%
Receive medical care	0.8%
Belong to a trade union	0%
Have a written agreement for work	0%



Females in and around Jaipur documented for this project earned one-fourth what their male counterparts did, representing a startling wage disparity. The rate of child labor (20.6%) was approximately the same as New Delhi — one out of five.

Jaipur is the capital and largest city of the state of Rajasthan. Researchers documented 248 cases in and around the greater Jaipur area. The workers were primarily found in small, concrete homes. Jaipur is the only city in this project in which any workers were found to be receiving above the stipulated minimum wages for their work, and they were only a small number of male laborers who were employed in two worker colonies in the city outskirts. The stipulated minimum wages for the state of Rajasthan are:

Rajasthan

Unskilled - \$3.09 (\$0.39 per hour)


Semi-skilled - \$3.24 (\$0.40 per hour)

Males (n=25) earned an average eight-hour equivalent wage of \$3.48 (\$0.44 per hour), and females earned an average eight-hour equivalent wage of \$0.90 (\$0.11 per hour). Based on these numbers, females in and around Jaipur documented for this project earned one-fourth what their male counterparts did, representing a startling wage disparity. 6.9% of workers in and around Jaipur were found to be working in conditions of forced labor under international law, and 2.4% toiled in conditions of bonded labor. The rate of child labor (20.6%) was approximately the same as New Delhi — one out of five. More than half the workers (53.6%) suffered delays in wage payments. Jaipur had the highest rate among northern Indian cities in which workers had an alternate source of income (15.3%), second only to Pollachi in the south. Approximately six out of ten workers (59.3%) indicated they would rather leave home-based garment work but were unable to do so, and only 26.6% of workers indicated they were free to pursue other work. Only three out of ten (29.8%)

workers had a bank account, the lowest rate of any city documented in this project. Most account balances were zero. Finally, Jaipur was the only city in which a few workers indicated they received medical care if injured (0.8%), these being some of the same male workers who earned over the minimum wage.

3. Shahjahanpur

Total cases documented	131
Forced labor under Indian law	100.0%
Forced labor under International law	10.7%
Bonded labor	7.6%
Child labor	7.6%
Child laborers who attend school	22.1%
Average 8-hour wage	\$1.09
Male	\$0.95
Female	\$1.10
Wages delayed	84.7%
Average daily hours worked	7.2
Female	96.2%
Like the work	60.3%
Began work from a form of duress	72.5%
Began as a minor	74.8%
Have another source of income	0.0%
Average years worked	7.6
Average family size	6.3
Average income per HH member	\$0.74
Muslim or Scheduled Caste	100.0%
Would rather leave but cannot	85.5%
Penalized if work unfinished on time	51.9%
Free to do other work	38.2%
Chronic physical ailment or injury	13.0%
Literate	13.7%
Keep records of their work	6.1%
Feel earn enough for a decent life	17.6%
Have a bank account	51.1%
Able to save income	11.5%
Receive medical care	0%
Belong to a trade union	0%
Have a written agreement for work	0%



Roughly three out of four workers in this area began working in the home-based garment sector as children (74.8%), and 72.5% began the work from some form of duress. Daily income per household member in Shahjahanpur was the lowest of any city documented (\$0.74).

Shahjahanpur is the capital of the Shahjahanpur district in the state of Uttar Pradesh. It is a primarily Muslim area. Researchers documented 131 cases, approximately 93% of whom were Muslim. The workers lived in slum-like dwellings in villages outside of the city. All workers were found to be receiving less than the government stipulated minimum wages. Males earned an average eight-hour equivalent wage of \$0.95 (\$0.12 per hour) and females earned an average eight-hour equivalent wage of \$1.10 (\$0.14 per hour). Three of the five males documented in this area were children, who were earning scarcely \$0.60 per eight-hour workday, hence the lower average wage of males as compared to females. The relevant daily minimum wages for the state of Uttar Pradesh are:

Uttar Pradesh

Unskilled - \$4.25 (\$0.53 per hour)


Semi-skilled - \$4.67 (\$0.58 per hour)

The workers documented in Shahjahanpur received approximately 75% to 80% less than the state stipulated minimum wages. In addition, 10.7% of the workers were found to be in conditions of forced labor under international law; 7.6% were found be working in conditions of bonded labor; and 7.6% of the workers were children. Only 22.1% of these child laborers were attending school to any degree. Workers in Shahjahanpur suffered the highest level of delay in their payments (84.7%) of any city documented, with some delays being as long as three or four months. Roughly three out of four workers in this area began working in the home-based garment sector as children (74.8%), and 72.5% began the work from some

form of duress. Not one of the workers in this area had an alternate source of income. Daily income per household member in Shahjahanpur was the lowest of any city documented (\$0.74). 85.5% of workers would rather leave home-based garment work but were not able to do so, and in all these cases the inability to do was because they were not allowed to leave their homes by custom. More than half (51.9%) of the workers suffered penalties of unpaid wages and in some cases verbal abuse if they did not complete their work on time. Only 13.7% of the workers were literate, the lowest level of any city documented. Similarly, Shahjahanpur has the lowest level of individuals who kept records of their work (6.1%). Shahjahanpur is without question one of the poorest and most oppressed areas that the researchers documented, and its population of impoverished Muslims represents one of the most downtrodden communities in northern India.

4. Meerut

Total cases documented	122
Forced labor under Indian law	100.0%
Forced labor under International law	11.5%
Bonded labor	0.0%
Child labor	12.3%
Child laborers who attend school	80.0%
Average 8-hour wage	\$0.73
Male	
Female	\$0.73
Wages delayed	7.4%
Average daily hours worked	6.5
Female	100.0%
Like the work	11.5%
Began work from a form of duress	81.1%
Began as a minor	42.6%
Have another source of income	11.5%
Average years worked	5.3
Average family size	5.8
Average income per HH member	\$1.21
Muslim or Scheduled Caste	100.0%
Would rather leave but cannot	78.7%
Penalized if work unfinished on time	23.8%
Free to do other work	68.0%
Chronic physical ailment or injury	30.3%
Literate	43.4%
Keep records of their work	34.4%
Feel earn enough for a decent life	0.0%
Have a bank account	67.2%
Able to save income	4.1%
Receive medical care	0%
Belong to a trade union	0%
Have a written agreement for work	0%




The workers around Meerut had the lowest average eight-hour equivalent wage of any city documented at \$0.73 (\$0.09 per hour), approximately 85% less than the minimum wages for the state of Uttar Pradesh. 11.5% of the workers were found to be toiling in conditions of forced labor under international law, and 12.3% were child laborers.

Meerut is an ancient city that dates back to the Indus River Civilization, located about 70 kilometers northeast of New Delhi in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Researchers documented 122 workers in villages around the city. All workers were female. The workers around Meerut had the lowest average eight-hour equivalent wage of any city documented at \$0.73 (\$0.09 per hour), approximately 85% less than the minimum wages for the state of Uttar Pradesh. 11.5% of the workers were found to be toiling in conditions of forced labor under international law, and 12.3% were child laborers. The child laborers in Meerut did, however, have by far the highest rate of some school attendance (80.0%) of all the cities documented in northern India. Meerut also had the highest literacy rate (43.4%) of any city documented in northern India. These findings align with Meeru's reputation of being an educational hub in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Higher literacy rates also led to the highest rate of record keeping among workers in northern India (34.4%). Despite having the lowest average wage of any city documented, the workers in Meerut had the lowest rate of delays in wage payments (7.4%), be it northern or southern India. Unsurprisingly, Meerut had the lowest rate of individuals who indicated they liked doing home-based garment work (11.5%), and among the highest level of workers who commenced the work under some form of duress (81.1%). Like New Delhi and Jaipur, some of the workers in Meerut (11.5%) did have alternate sources of income. Almost eight out of ten workers (78.7%) indicated they would rather leave home-based garment work but were unable to do so. However, a similar paradox as found in New Delhi was found in Meerut, which had the second highest level in

northern India (68.0%) of workers who said they were free to pursue other work. This situation can again be explained by workers articulating the theoretical freedom to pursue other work, even though there was no other work or alternatives for them to pursue. Along with Hapur, Meerut is the only city of the ten included in this study in which 0.0% of workers indicated that they felt they earned enough to lead a decent life. Given the anemic wage payments, this finding is not surprising. Finally, workers in Meerut had the highest level of having a bank account (67.2%) in northern India and second highest overall, though only 4.1% were able to save any income. Most bank account balances were zero.

5. Bareilly

Total cases documented	109
Forced labor under Indian law	100.0%
Forced labor under International law	21.1%
Bonded labor	10.1%
Child labor	11.0%
Child laborers who attend school	25.0%
Average 8-hour wage	\$1.34
Male	\$2.28
Female	\$1.20
Wages delayed	67.9%
Average daily hours worked	7.7
Female	87.2%
Like the work	68.8%
Began work from a form of duress	84.4%
Began as a minor	67.0%
Have another source of income	0.9%
Average years worked	9.4
Average family size	6.1
Average income per HH member	\$0.84
Muslim or Scheduled Caste	100.0%
Would rather leave but cannot	71.6%
Penalized if work unfinished on time	56.0%
Free to do other work	64.2%
Chronic physical ailment or injury	36.7%
Literate	18.3%
Keep records of their work	16.5%
Feel earn enough for a decent life	25.7%
Have a bank account	50.5%
Able to save income	13.8%
Receive medical care	0%
Belong to a trade union	0%
Have a written agreement for work	0%




Bareilly had the highest proportion of male workers of any city documented (12.8%). Bareilly had the highest rate of workers of any city documented who were found to be toiling in conditions of forced labor under international law (21.1%). Workers in Bareilly had the second highest rate of wage payment delay (67.9%) of any city documented.

Bareilly is the capital of Bareilly district in the northern portion of the state of Uttar Pradesh located approximately 250 kilometers north of New Delhi. Researchers documented 109 workers in around the city, most of whom were working in mixed concrete-mud homes. Bareilly had the highest proportion of male workers of any city documented (12.8%). All workers earned less than the minimum wage for the state of Uttar Pradesh, with female workers earning an average eight-hour equivalent wage of \$1.20 (\$0.15 per hour), and males earning an average eight-hour equivalent wage of \$2.28 (\$0.29 per hour), almost double what females earned. Females earned roughly 70% to 75% less than the minimum wage for the state of Uttar Pradesh, and males earned roughly 45% to 50% less than the minimum wage. Bareilly had the highest rate of workers of any city documented who were found to be toiling in conditions of forced labor under international law (21.1%). In addition, 10.1% of workers toiled in bonded labor, and 11.0% were child laborers. Only 25.0% of the child laborers attended any amount of school. Workers in Bareilly had the second highest rate of wage payment delay (67.9%) of any city documented. Approximately seven out of ten (68.8%) workers indicated that they liked the work; 84.4% indicated they began home-based garment work out of some form of duress; and 67.0% began the work as children. Only a handful of workers (0.9%) had alternate sources of income. Households documented in Bareilly had the second lowest level of income per member at \$0.84. 71.6% of workers indicated they would rather leave home-based garment work but were unable to do so, and more than half (56.0%) suffered penalties for not finishing

their work on time, the second highest rate of any city documented. Workers in Bareilly had the second lowest literacy rate (18.3%) of any city documented, and among the lowest rates of keeping records of their work (16.5%). Interestingly, the workers in Bareilly had the highest rate of any city documented of feeling that they earned enough to lead a decent life (25.7%). Around half of workers (50.5%) had bank accounts, and 13.8% of workers indicated they were able to save income.

6. Sikandrabad

Total cases documented	94
Forced labor under Indian law	100.0%
Forced labor under International law	10.6%
Bonded labor	14.9%
Child labor	31.9%
Child laborers who attend school	16.7%
Average 8-hour wage	\$1.15
Male	\$1.43
Female	\$1.12
Wages delayed	22.3%
Average daily hours worked	8.1
Female	90.4%
Like the work	39.4%
Began work from a form of duress	86.2%
Began as a minor	75.5%
Have another source of income	0.0%
Average years worked	8.4
Average family size	6.3
Average income per HH member	\$1.16
Muslim or Scheduled Caste	100.0%
Would rather leave but cannot	54.3%
Penalized if work unfinished on time	44.7%
Free to do other work	53.2%
Chronic physical ailment or injury	30.9%
Literate	23.4%
Keep records of their work	10.6%
Feel earn enough for a decent life	11.7%
Have a bank account	45.7%
Able to save income	7.4%
Receive medical care	0%
Belong to a trade union	0%
Have a written agreement for work	0%




Sikandrabad had by far the highest rate of child labor of any city in this project at 31.9%. Approximately three out of four workers (75.5%) began home-based garment work as children. Severely depressed wages and the very high rate of child labor make Sikandrabad an area in dire need of ameliorative efforts targeted for home-based workers.

Sikandrabad is a small city located about 50 kilometers southeast of New Delhi in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Researchers documented 94 workers in mixed concrete-mud and mud hut homes in and around the city. The workers in Sikandrabad were highly secretive about their work, which the researchers suspect is due to pressure from contractors who are keen to keep hidden the very poor conditions in which they work, as well as the high rate of child labor in the area. Approximately nine out of ten workers (90.4%) documented in Sikandrabad were female. All workers earned less than the minimum wage for the state of Uttar Pradesh, with female workers earning an average eight-hour equivalent wage of \$1.12 (\$0.14 per hour), and males earning an average eight-hour equivalent wage of \$1.43 (\$0.18 per hour). These workers thereby earned approximately 60% to 70% less than the state stipulated minimum wages for the state of Uttar Pradesh. 10.6% of the workers were found to be toiling in conditions of forced labor under international law, and 14.9% were found to be working in conditions of bonded labor, the second highest level of any city documented. Sikandrabad had by far the highest rate of child labor of any city in this project at 31.9%. Only 16.7% of these child laborers attended any amount of school. Roughly four out of ten workers (39.4%) indicated they liked doing home-based garment work, and 86.2% (second highest of any city documented) indicated that they began doing home-based garment work under some form of duress. Approximately three out of four workers (75.5%) began home-based garment work as children. None of the workers had an alternate source of income. Around half the workers (54.3%) indicated they would rather leave

home-based garment work but were unable to do so, and around the same amount (53.2%) said they were free to pursue other work. Literacy rates were low at 23.4%, as were rates of record keeping (10.6%). Very few workers felt they earned enough to live a decent life (11.7%). Almost half (45.7%) had a bank account, with very low levels of savings (7.4%). Severely depressed wages and the very high rate of child labor make Sikandrabad an area in dire need of ameliorative efforts targeted for home-based workers.

7. Farrukhabad

Total cases documented	45
Forced labor under Indian law	100.0%
Forced labor under International law	13.3%
Bonded labor	13.3%
Child labor	20.0%
Child laborers who attend school	11.1%
Average 8-hour wage	\$1.42
Male	
Female	\$1.42
Wages delayed	60.0%
Average daily hours worked	7.5
Female	100.0%
Like the work	68.9%
Began work from a form of duress	77.8%
Began as a minor	68.9%
Have another source of income	0.0%
Average years worked	9.4
Average family size	5.5
Average income per HH member	\$1.25
Muslim or Scheduled Caste	100.0%
Would rather leave but cannot	88.9%
Penalized if work unfinished on time	57.8%
Free to do other work	2.2%
Chronic physical ailment or injury	35.6%
Literate	26.7%
Keep records of their work	24.4%
Feel earn enough for a decent life	15.6%
Have a bank account	40.0%
Able to save income	6.7%
Receive medical care	0%
Belong to a trade union	0%
Have a written agreement for work	0%




Almost eight out of ten workers (77.8%) indicated they began doing the work from some form of duress. Individuals in Farrukhabad had the highest rate of wishing they could leave home-based garment work but not being able to do so (88.9%). These workers also had the highest rate of suffering a penalty if they did not complete the work on time (57.8%).

Farrukhabad is a small city located near the central part of the state of Uttar Pradesh. Researchers documented 45 workers in semi-urban and village-based environments in and around the city. Approximately 96% of the workers were Muslim. All workers were female, earning an average eight-hour equivalent wage of \$1.42 (\$0.18 per hour), highest of any city in northern India and second only to Tiruppur in the south. Nonetheless, the wages were still approximately 65% to 70% less than the state stipulated minimum wages for the state of Uttar Pradesh. 13.3% of the workers were found to be toiling in conditions of forced labor under international law, and each of these workers were also found to be toiling in conditions of bonded labor. 20.0% of the workers in Farrukhabad were children, and only 11.1% of whom attended any amount of school. Six out of ten workers suffered delays of several weeks or more in their wage payments. Almost seven out of ten (68.9%) indicated they liked doing home-based garment work, and the same percentage began doing the work as children. Almost eight out of ten workers (77.8%) indicated they began doing the work from some form of duress. None of the workers had an alternate source of income. Individuals in Farrukhabad had been doing home-based garment work for an average of 9.4 years when the researchers documented them, the longest of any city along with Bareilly. Individuals in Farrukhabad had the highest rate of wishing they could leave home-based garment work but not being able to do so (88.9%). These workers also had the highest rate of suffering a penalty if they did not complete the work on time (57.8%), and by far the lowest rate of being free to pursue other work (2.2%). Literacy rates (26.7%) and record keeping (24.4%)

were relatively low. Only 15.6% of workers felt they earned enough to lead a decent life, and only 40.0% had a bank account, second lowest to Jaipur. Only 6.7% of workers were able to save any income.

8. Hapur

Total cases documented	31
Forced labor under Indian law	100.0%
Forced labor under International law	19.4%
Bonded labor	29.0%
Child labor	0.0%
Child laborers who attend school	NA
Average 8-hour wage	\$1.13
Male	
Female	\$1.13
Wages delayed	16.1%
Average daily hours worked	8.8
Female	100.0%
Like the work	12.9%
Began work from a form of duress	87.1%
Began as a minor	80.6%
Have another source of income	0.0%
Average years worked	8.7
Average family size	7.0
Average income per HH member	\$0.91
Muslim or Scheduled Caste	100.0%
Would rather leave but cannot	87.1%
Penalized if work unfinished on time	29.0%
Free to do other work	32.3%
Chronic physical ailment or injury	48.4%
Literate	22.6%
Keep records of their work	19.4%
Feel earn enough for a decent life	0.0%
Have a bank account	54.8%
Able to save income	3.2%
Receive medical care	0%
Belong to a trade union	0%
Have a written agreement for work	0%



Hapur is the only city in the north in which no child laborers were documented, however, this is primarily because consent or assent were not provided for any of the numerous children who were seen working alongside their parents. Hapur was second lowest for individuals who indicated they liked doing home-based garment work (12.9%).

Hapur is a small city located about 60 kilometers east of New Delhi in the state of Uttar Pradesh. Researchers documented 31 workers in small, concrete homes located beyond the city limits. All workers were Muslim, and all workers were female. The workers earned an average eight-hour equivalent wage of \$1.13 (\$0.14 per hour), roughly 75% less than the stipulated minimum wages for the state of Uttar Pradesh. 19.4% of the workers were found to be toiling in conditions of forced labor under international law (second only to Bareilly), and 29.0% of workers were found to be toiling in conditions of bonded labor, highest of any city documented. All but one of the loans which led to bonded labor were taken to meet basic needs for survival or for medicine. Hapur is the only city in the north in which no child laborers were documented, however, this is primarily because consent or assent were not provided for any of the numerous children who were seen working alongside their parents. Hapur was second lowest for individuals who indicated they liked doing home-based garment work (12.9%). The city had the highest rates of workers who indicated they commenced the work from some form of duress (87.1%) as well as individuals who commenced home based work as children (80.6%). None of the workers had an alternate source of income. Household size was largest in Hapur at seven members, which contributes to the fact that the cases in this city have the second lowest level of daily income per household member (\$0.91). 87.1% of workers indicated they would rather leave home-based garment work but were unable to do so, while 32.3% indicated they were free to pursue other work. Hapur had the highest level of workers suffering from a chronic physical ailment

or injury (48.4%). Literacy rates (22.6%) and record keeping (19.4%) were low. Along with Meerut, Hapur is the only city in which not a single worker felt she earned enough to lead a decent life. More than half (54.8%) of workers had a bank account, but these workers had the lowest rate of being able to save income (3.2%). Most bank account balances were zero. Workers in Hapur were in a particularly bleak condition, and more research must be conducted to try to gain consent and assent to document the child laborers in this city.



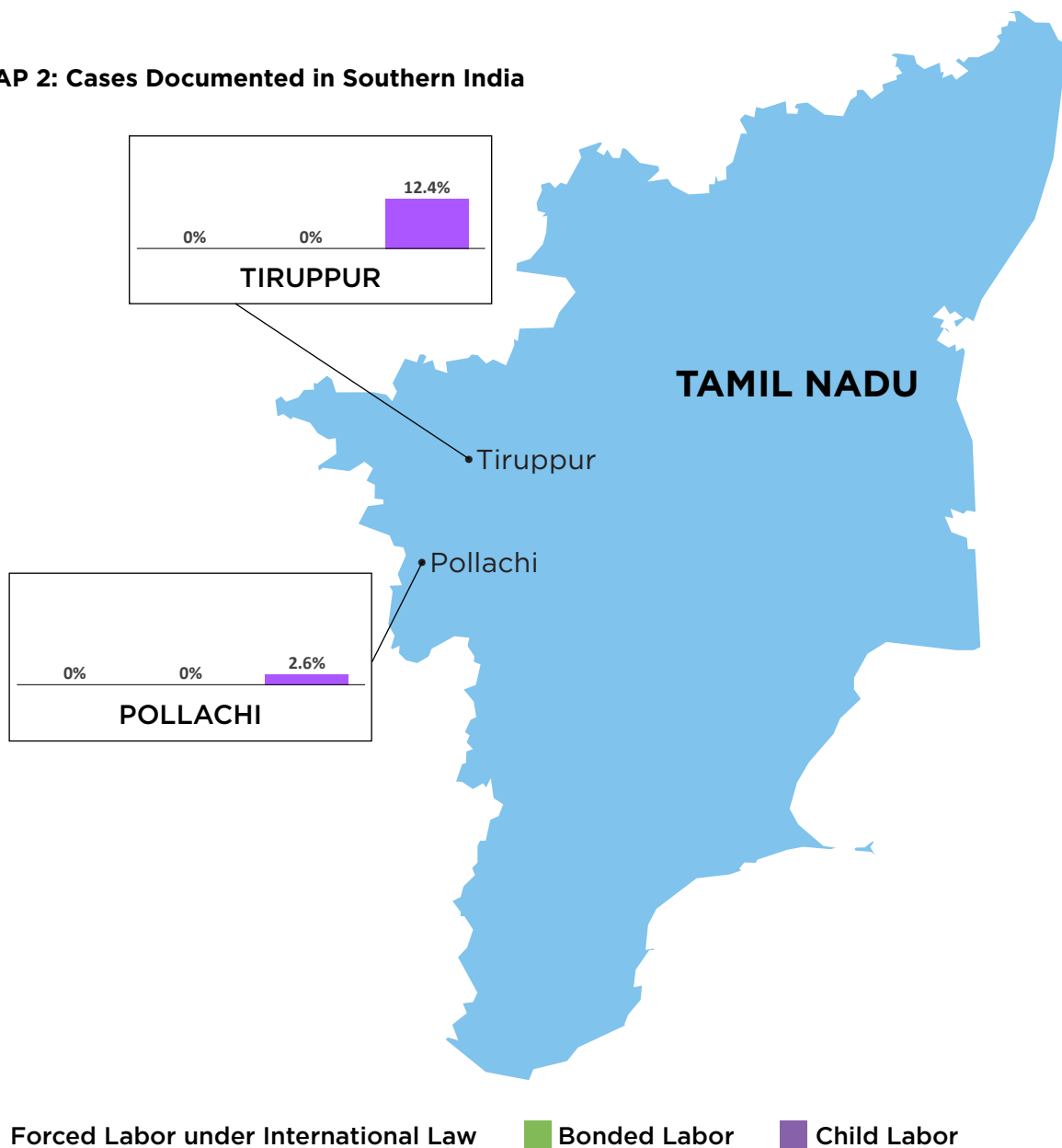
“In our culture, women are not allowed to leave the home. What else can I do but this work?” – A 26-YEAR-OLD GARMENT WORKER NEAR SHAHJAHANPUR

B. Cases Documented – Southern India

A total of 330 cases were documented in southern India within thirty kilometers of the following cities: Tiruppur


and Pollachi. Map 2 provides a pictorial representation of the spread of cases documented in southern India. Percentages on forced labor under Indian law are not included as they are 100% in both cities documented.

MAP 2: Cases Documented in Southern India



1. Tiruppur

Total cases documented	291
Forced labor under Indian law	100.0%
Forced labor under International law	0.0%
Bonded labor	0.0%
Child labor	12.4%
Child laborers who attend school	91.7%
Average 8-hour wage	\$1.45
Male	
Female	\$1.45
Wages delayed	13.7%
Average daily hours worked	6.1
Female	100.0%
Like the work	98.3%
Began work from a form of duress	17.5%
Began as a minor	16.2%
Have another source of income	12.0%
Average years worked	5.3
Average family size	4.0
Average income per HH member	\$2.66
Muslim or Scheduled Caste	97.9%
Would rather leave but cannot	17.2%
Penalized if work unfinished on time	16.2%
Free to do other work	87.3%
Chronic physical ailment or injury	2.4%
Literate	96.6%
Keep records of their work	82.8%
Feel earn enough for a decent life	15.5%
Have a bank account	65.3%
Able to save income	14.4%
Receive medical care	0%
Belong to a trade union	0%
Have a written agreement for work	0%




Only 17.5% of individuals began home-based garment work from some form of duress. The impetus to earn to pay for the school fees of children among the home-based garment workers in the south was much greater than the north, where earnings of home-based garment workers was much more related to basic survival of the family unit, as opposed to education of children.

Tiruppur is located in the west-central portion of the southern state of Tamil Nadu, about 450 kilometers southwest of the state capital of Chennai. Researchers documented 291 workers in homes in and around the city. All workers were female. Almost all workers belonged to a scheduled caste, with the exception of a handful of Muslims and Christians. The workers earned an average eight-hour equivalent wage of \$1.45 (\$0.18 per hour), roughly 70% less than the stipulated minimum wage for the state of Tamil Nadu of \$4.69 per day (\$0.59 per hour). No individuals were found to be working in conditions of forced labor under international law, and no individuals were found to be working in conditions of bonded labor. 12.4% of workers were children, however, 91.4% of those children attend school at least six hours per day. A small portion of workers (13.7%) suffered wage delays of usually a couple of weeks. Almost all workers (98.3%) reported that they liked doing home-based garment work, considerably more than in any city in the north. Conditions of work were also more sanitary, well-lit, and ventilated than in the north. Only 17.5% of individuals began home-based garment work from some form of duress, much lower than the lowest city in the north (Jaipur) which registered 69.0% for the same question. Average income per household member in Tiruppur (\$2.66) was more than double that of any city in the north, and in some cases triple. Only 17.2% of workers in Tiruppur indicated they would rather leave home-based garment work but were unable to do so. The lowest level recorded in the north for this same question was 54.3%,

in Sinkandrabad. Almost nine-out-of-ten (87.3%) workers in Tiruppur reported being free to pursue other work. Only 2.4% of individuals in Tiruppur reported working with a chronic injury or ailment, far less than any city in the north. Literacy in Tiruppur was far greater (96.6%) than any city in the north, which leads to greater levels of record keeping (82.8%) among workers as compared to any city in the north. Interestingly, even though the workers in Tiruppur earned much more than their counterparts in the north, only 15.5% of workers in Tiruppur reported that they felt they earned enough to lead a decent life, similar to most cities in the north. Almost two-thirds (65.3%) of workers in Tiruppur had a bank account, and 14.4% reported being able to save some of their income, the highest of any city documented, but still a very low rate. Most of the women who were documented reported that they did the work to earn income to pay for the school fees of their children, though they felt they barely earned enough to do so. Nonetheless, the impetus to earn to pay for the school fees of children among the home-based garment workers in the south was much greater than the north, where earnings of home-based garment workers was much more related to basic survival of the family unit, as opposed to education of children.

2. Pollachi

Total cases documented	39
Forced labor under Indian law	100.0%
Forced labor under Int'l law	0.0%
Bonded labor	0.0%
Child labor	2.6%
Child laborers who attend school	100.0%
Average 8-hour wage	\$1.38
Male	
Female	\$1.38
Wages delayed	12.8%
Average daily hours worked	7.0
Female	100.0%
Like the work	100.0%
Began work from a form of duress	2.6%
Began as a minor	2.6%
Have another source of income	38.5%
Average years worked	7.3
Average family size	4.1
Average income per HH member	\$1.57
Muslim or Scheduled Caste	97.4%
Would rather leave but cannot	7.7%
Penalized if work unfinished on time	0.0%
Free to do other work	100.0%
Chronic physical ailment or injury	5.1%
Literate	97.4%
Keep records of their work	94.9%
Feel earn enough for a decent life	5.1%
Have a bank account	76.9%
Able to save income	5.1%
Receive medical care	0%
Belong to a trade union	0%
Have a written agreement for work	0%



All individuals reported that they liked doing home-based garment work. Only 2.6% of individuals reported that they commenced home-based garment work due to some form of duress, and only 2.6% began home-based garment work as a child, by far the lowest levels of any city documented. Average income per household member was \$1.57, more than any city in the north.

Pollachi is a small town in the west-central portion of the southern state of Tamil Nadu, about 65 kilometers southwest of Tiruppur. It must be noted at the outset that the researchers identified a work camp run by the state government with about 200 families performing apparel work; however, they were not allowed access to document any of the individuals working inside this camp. They noted that the families inside this work camp were not allowed to leave without permission and were taken to and from the camp by agents each day. The conditions inside this work camp are unknown.

Researchers managed to document 39 workers in homes in and around Pollachi. All workers were female. Almost all workers belonged to a scheduled caste, with the exception of a handful of Muslims and Christians. The workers earned an average eight-hour equivalent wage of \$1.38 (\$0.17 per hour), roughly 70% less than the stipulated minimum wage for the state of Tamil Nadu of \$4.69 per day (\$0.59 per hour). No individuals were found to be working in conditions of forced labor under international law, and no individuals were found to be working in conditions of bonded labor. Only 2.6% of the workers were children, and all of them attended school at least six hours per day. A small portion of workers (12.8%) suffered wage delays, usually of a couple of weeks. All individuals reported that they liked doing home-based garment work. Only 2.6% of individuals reported that they commenced home-based garment work due to some form of duress, and only 2.6% began home-based garment work as a child,

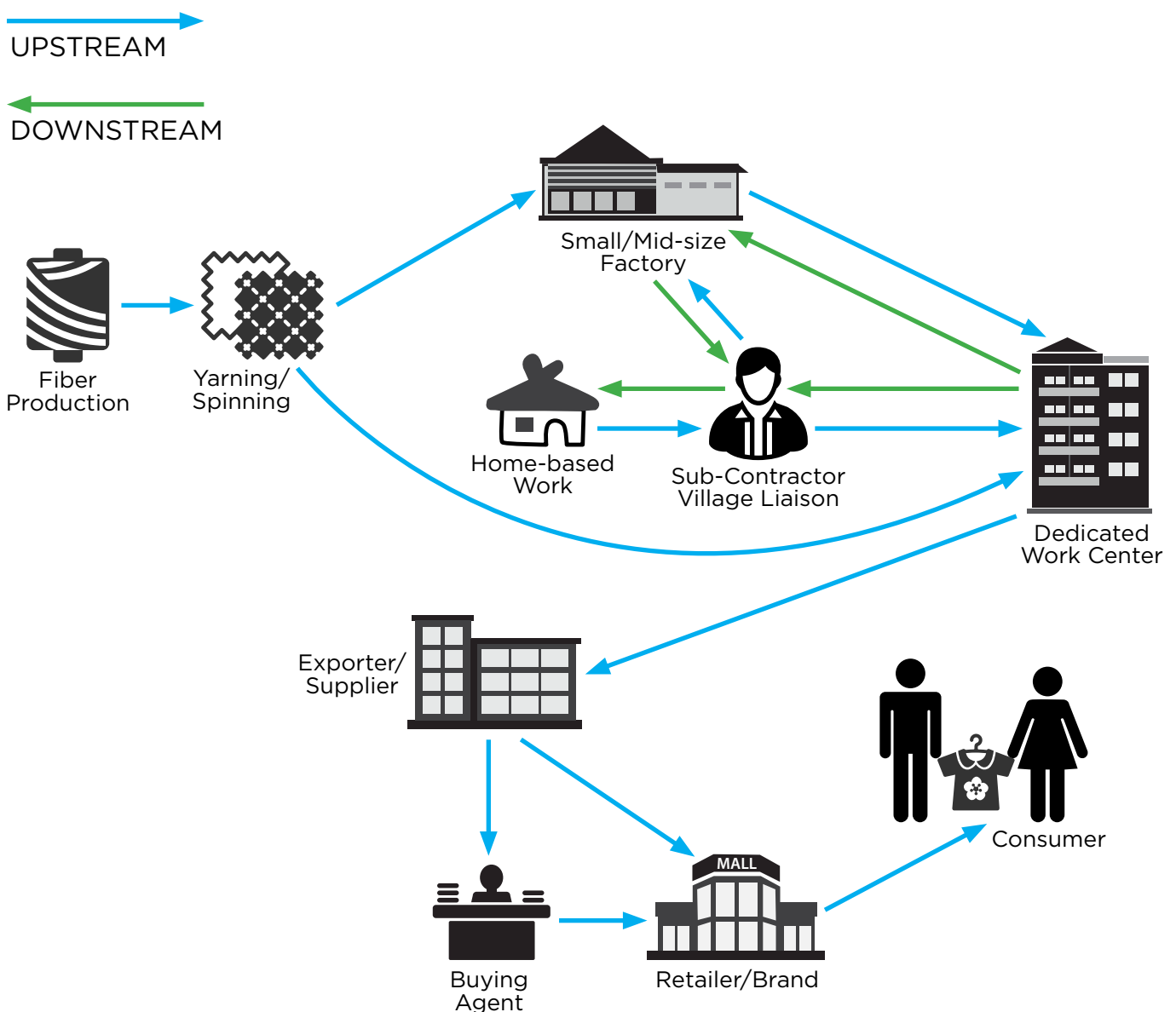
by far the lowest levels of any city documented. 38.5% of workers reported having an alternate source of income, by far the highest level of any city documented. Average income per household member was \$1.57, more than any city in the north, but still considerably less than Tiruppur (\$2.66). All workers reported that they were free to do other work. Almost all workers (97.4%) were literate, and almost all (94.9%) kept records of their work. As with Tiruppur, a high proportion of workers had a bank account (76.9%), though only 5.1% indicated they were able to save money, and the same percentage felt they earned enough to lead a decent life. As with Tiruppur, most of the women indicated that they did the work to earn income to pay for the school fees of their children, though they felt they barely earned enough to do so.


“Since I was nine years old I have done this work in a helpless condition.”

– A 63-YEAR-OLD GARMENT WORKER NEAR NEW DELHI

VII. The Garment Supply Chain

The supply chain for the garment sector in India is depicted in the chart below.





There are two preliminary steps that take place prior to garment production, both of which are known to have significant levels of child labor and should be the subject of additional research. The first step is fiber production which involves producing the natural fibers (cotton, linen, jute, silk, etc.) or synthetic fibers (polyester, lycra, etc.) used in making garments. The second step involves converting these fibers into yarns at spinning mills. This yarn feeds into the production phase of the garment supply chain at various points — either at the work center, factory, or sub-contractor. The production phase of the garment supply chain can be divided into two sectors — formal and informal.

The Formal Sector

The formal sector of the garment supply chain in India is more organized with relatively better working conditions and wages. The formal sector commences when buying agents or major brands place orders for garments to be filled by producers in India. Much of this work is completed by workers in dedicated work centers or factories located in urban centers. These work centers and factories are often vertically integrated, meaning all garment manufacturing processes take place within the factory premises. Upon completion, orders are shipped via sea to retailers abroad.

The Informal Sector

Depending on the capacity of a work center or factory, or during times of increased seasonal demand, production is outsourced into the informal portion of the supply chain. In addition, processes such as thread cutting, embroidery, embellishment, knotting and tasseling, bead work, fringing, lacework, fixing buttons, and other hand-intensive work is very often outsourced to home-based workers. Indeed, the Indian garment sector could not exist without the informal portion of the industry. Crucially, garment centers in the formal portion of the industry rarely disclose or track sub-contracting to home-based workers, which creates supply chain opacity that facilitates the exploitation of home-based workers. In the case of small to medium-sized factories in peri-urban or rural areas, the workers in these settings can often be seasonal or migrant workers. Labor abuses are well known to take place with these migrant workers, and further

research is required to document conditions. With home-based workers in villages, a local sub-contractor always liaises with the worker. He brings materials and supplies to the worker, and he picks up the orders when completed. He also disburses wages for work completed, often after delays of several weeks or months as documented in this project. There are no formal agreements or written contracts of any kind at the bottom of the informal portion of the garment sector supply chain, and there is also no monitoring of wage payments or working conditions. Usually a few or just one sub-contractor operates in specific villages or peri-urban areas, thereby establishing long-term relationships with the home-based workers. Sub-contractors may also hire other sub-contractors or village intermediaries to fill orders further afield in villages that can be 40 or 50 kilometers from the nearest city. The most experienced sub-contractors will have established direct links with small- or medium-sized factories and even some urban factories with which they liaise to fill order.

The home-based workers who were the focus of this research project are the most vulnerable and underpaid individuals in the garment supply chain. They must perform work for wages that are usually 60% to 80% below the state-stipulated minimum wages, while also juggling the responsibilities of managing daily household chores. They may not be allowed to leave their homes and face other socio-cultural constraints that severely limit their alternatives and opportunities. They have no recourse for remedying exploitative working conditions, and the subordinated status of female gender, especially in rural contexts in India, further promotes their exploitation and inability to bargain for decent wages and working conditions. Women and girls form the oppressed, exploited, and highly disempowered underclass of many informal sectors in India, and the garment sector is no exception.





Western brands and their customers must become more aware of the exploitative conditions under which their clothes are made.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following ten recommendations are presented as a starting point to help address the exploitation of women and girls in India's home-based garment sector. These recommendations are made in light of the fact that foreign brands provide vital employment to women and girls from historically oppressed ethnic communities who may otherwise have no option to earn a livelihood, hence it is crucial to assess and improve conditions in the informal portion of India's garment sector.


1. Additional Research – More research must be conducted to generate additional knowledge on various aspects of labor exploitation in India's garment sector. Some of the most important issues to explore would be documentation of conditions at worker colonies in southern India where conditions are understood to be exploitative of migrant female workers; further documentation of cities in northern India where conditions were uncovered to be particularly negative; documentation of labor exploitation in the fiber production and spinning mill stages of the garment supply chain; and exploration of causal links between underpaid minimum wages and other forms of severe labor exploitation experienced by a family unit such as bonded labor, child labor, and human trafficking. A broad-based study of conditions in urban factories and work centers in the formal sector of India's garment industry is also needed.

2. Public-Private Partnership – A high-level partnership comprised of academic experts, apparel industry retailers, government officials in the U.S. and India, charitable foundations, NGOs working in India's

garment sector, and relevant trade associations should be assembled with a focus on collaborating to address the findings of this report. This group should create a "Garment Protocol" that is focused on enacting measures required to ensure that labor exploitation and child labor are eliminated from India's garment sector, and that ongoing efforts are made to improve the living and working conditions of the workers at the bottom of the supply chain. Above all, efforts must be made to ensure children are able to access and attend school full time, starting with charitable support from the major garment brands that source inexpensive labor in India.

3. Form a Home-Based Garment Worker Union – There is no union in India specifically for home-based garment workers. Although the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) does promote the rights of low-wage female workers in the informal economy, a specific garment sector union must be formed and promoted so that home-based garment workers have more bargaining power, rights, and an avenue to seek redress for exploitative conditions.

4. Transparency and Formalization of the Home-Based Garment Sector – All aspects of home-based garment work should be formalized and made more transparent. Sub-contractors should register all home-based workers with whom they work, and they should provide this information to suppliers and brands. All home-based workers should be provided with written contracts from the supplier that outsources production to them, and these contracts should ensure minimum standards of working conditions and wages. Labor inspectors should be engaged to monitor and audit conditions for home-based workers. Laws should be



passed that specifically protect home-based workers from exploitation. The more formalized and regulated home-based work becomes, the better the conditions for workers will be.

5. Increase and Enforce Minimum Wages

– Minimum wages in each state documented for an eight-hour workday in home-based garment work are prima facie inadequate. Even if fully paid, these wages leave families vulnerable to exploitation as the wages are insufficient to meet basic needs, provide for the education of children, and ensure adequate savings in the event of emergencies. It is recommended that the semi-skilled minimum wage be set at Rs. 535 per eight-hour day, which translates to roughly \$1.00 per hour (and \$1.50 in New Delhi). This wage should be standardized and enforced across the industry in all states in India. It goes without saying that whatever the minimum wage is, it must be enforced – for females as well as males. Brands can assist in this endeavor by requiring that suppliers and sub-contractors disclose wages paid to home-based workers, and by monitoring these payments.

6. Payment for Overtime – In addition to enforcing minimum wage payments, workers must be compensated for overtime work. Workers must not be coerced or compelled to work 12 or more hours per day just to receive an eight-hour minimum wage. If a worker chooses to work additional hours, or if she or he does so in order to help meet demand during peak production times, they must be properly compensated for doing so.

7. Supply Chain Inspections – A system of independent, third-party supply chain inspections must be established to monitor every stage in the garment sector supply chain — from fiber production through to embellishments. These inspections must include a mechanism for ensuring that dedicated work centers always track and disclose the details of sub-contracting to home-based workers. These inspections must also include all of the exploitative labor conditions documented in this project — forced labor, bonded labor, and child labor. Another element of the inspections must be to increase transparency between the retailer in the West and the production end of the supply chain. The use of technology

to increase transparency and the creation of mobile or SMS-based reporting mechanisms for home-based workers can help stakeholders become aware of and address a range of exploitative conditions in a timely fashion. Industry, foundations, and governments will naturally have to provide the financial support for the organizations that are tasked with the independent inspection and verification of the garment industry supply chain in India.

8. Increase Investigations and Prosecutions

– A necessary element to improving conditions for India's home-based garment workers will be to increase the level of investigation and prosecution of those who exploit the workers. Ensuring a sufficiently deterrent penalty for the offense will also help invert the current perception that India's most vulnerable populations can be exploited with impunity.

9. Support and Empower Women, Girls, and Outcaste Communities

– The majority of those exploited in India's home-based garment sector (and across the nation's informal economy) are women, girls, and outcaste communities. Women and girls must receive an education so that they can be literate, confident, and empowered. They should receive skills training so that they can pursue alternative sources of income during the off-season or during periods of low production. Literacy will also help home-based workers understand the terms of their work, keep records, track payments, and negotiate more effectively. Social awareness campaigns focused on improving the status of low caste and outcaste communities must be also undertaken. The more educated and empowered these vulnerable communities are, the less likely they are to be exploited.

10. Increase Awareness – Western brands and their customers must become more aware of the exploitative conditions under which their clothes are made. Awareness campaigns based on research-driven data can help consumers demand that retailers and other stakeholders address the issues. It will also hopefully allow consumers one day to make choices to purchase clothes that they have been assured are not tainted by servile labor exploitation or child labor.

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Endnotes

¹Scheduled Caste is the term given to those groups that have traditionally occupied the lowest status in the Indian caste system as "untouchables."

²In order to provide a basis for wage comparisons, each individual's wage has been adjusted for its equivalency for a full 8-hour work day, based on the individual's average hourly wage earned.

³All currency conversions in this report are based on the average rate of exchange between the Indian Rupee and the U.S. Dollar spanning the research period of October 3, 2017 to April 18, 2018, which was approximately Rs. 67 to 10ne U.S. dollar.

⁴Kax. 1979.

⁵Khan, S., Dhar, D., Navaid M., Pradhananga, M., Siddique, F., Singh, A., Yanthrawaduge, S. 2009.

⁶*Ibid.*

⁷India Brand Equity Foundation, at www.ibef.org.

⁸*Ibid.*

⁹Government of India, Ministry of Textiles. 2017-2018.

¹⁰Data compiled from World Integrated Trade Database

¹¹International Trade Administration. 2016.

¹²Data Compiled from World Integrated Trade Database.

¹³Fibre2Fashion.com. 2014.

¹⁴ILO. 2017.

¹⁵ILO. 2016.

¹⁶ILO. 2015.

¹⁷Bhullar, H., Singh, A., Sabharwal, N. 2015.

¹⁸Vankateswarlu, D. 2015.

¹⁹Theuws, M. and Overeem, P. 2014.

²⁰India Committee of the Netherlands. 2016.

²¹Peepercamp, Marijn and Ray, Pramita. 2018.

²²Coninck, Nicky, Theuws, Martje, and Overeem, Pauline. 2011.

²³Bhaskaran, Nathan, Phillips, Upendranadh, 2010.

²⁴Biggeri, Mario and Mehrotra, Santosh. 2002.

²⁵Chen, Martha. 2014.

²⁶People's Union for Democratic Rights vs. Union of India and Others, 1982 1 S.C.R. at 464

²⁷Bonded Labor System (Abolition) Act, 1976, (s2)

²⁸United States Department of Labor. 2016.

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