

Home Managers – a Step towards Women Empowerment

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Introduction

Domestic work is one of the oldest occupations in the world. But what could be more ironic than the fact, that these domestic workers, who are engaged in a work that entitles their employers a life of comfort, remain invisible and marginalized.

According to the 2001 census, about 50% of the 80 million inter-state migrants are domestic workers. Nearly 90% of domestic workers in India are twelve to seventy five years old women.¹ Over the last few years, studies on domestic workers in India have noted the increase in the numbers of migrant female domestic workers in the cities. However, this sizeable number of urban female domestic workers still remains largely unrecognized in public records (including economic reports) and under-reported in the labour market.

Table 1: Growth of Domestic Workers by Category

Category (Domestic workers)	1999-2000			2004-2005		
	Number of Workers	Percentage of total female employment	Female share (%)	Numbers of Workers	Percentage of total female employment	Female share (%)
House- maid/ servant	438,200	0.4	80.4	2,381,200	1.6	87.4
Cook	6,400	0.0	72.6	96,600	0.1	73.9
Govern- ess/ba- bysitter	2,600	0.0	76.4	69,600	0.0	74.2
Total	447,100	0.4	63.4	2,547,400	1.8	71.6

Source: Rajni Palriwala and Neeta.N., "Paid Care Workers in India : Domestic Workers and Anganwadi Workers" (Geneva : UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD),2009), UNRISD

The working hours of these domestic workers (household help) can be anywhere between eight and eighteen hours a day with no recompense for additional hours or extra work. While exploitation of full time workers is quite common, even part-time help work for all seven days a week.

¹ National Domestic Workers' Movement

Wages for household help could vary from a low of Rs. 150 to a high of Rs. 2000 a month. Paid leave on medical grounds and medical benefits are often unheard of. Though domestic workers have been included in the Unorganized Workers' Social Security Act, 2008 (Act 33 of 2008), they are yet to get any benefits.

With poor compensation, non-existent employment welfare and benefits, uncongenial work environment and a high rate of abuse household help is, obviously, not a career of choice. Need to provide for the family or supplement irregular family income while lacking in any other skill-sets is the only reason for domestic workers to continue despite their plight. Since household work is considered low, dirty, and menial it is a challenge to integrate domestic workers into the mainstream Indian society.

The situation is worse for those who migrate from rural or *mofussil* areas to work as unskilled labour in urban agglomerations. Their spouses, sisters or daughters often take up such a route to pad-up family resources. The worst-hit are perhaps those young girls and boys who come through human trafficking cartels and agents that provide household workers.

Taking a leaf out of 'Urmila', a livelihoods programme pioneered by Gujarat-based NGO Saath, Empower Pragati Vocational & Staffing Pvt. Ltd (EPVS)² thought of launching a livelihoods initiative for domestic workers in 2010.

NSDC facilitated bringing on board Rajendra Joshi, an award winner for a similar programme at Saath. With his help and vision, Empower Pragati launched the Home Manager programme in 2010 in Delhi-NCR, Bangalore and Kolkata. While in Bangalore Resident Welfare Associations were approached for collaboration, in Kolkata several churches and missionaries expressed interest in the program. In December 2012, Empower Pragati signed an MoU with the Delhi Government for a pilot programme for Home Managers.

A Home Manager is a value-added household help, who will know how to run modern household gadgets and manage households that follow an increasingly global outlook. In this unique 'Home Manager' initiative of Empower Pragati efforts are made to generate awareness and then mobilize vulnerable women in the informal labour market to get skilled and trained as Home Managers. Upon successful certification trainees are appointed on the rolls of Empower Pragati with all statutory benefits and privileges.

² Empower Pragati, a partner company of the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC), is an India-based private sector social enterprise specializing in livelihood skill development to empower India's disadvantaged youth. Empower Pragati offers training to young men and women from economically weaker sections, enabling them to access sustainable livelihoods and growth opportunities. EPVS is actively working on various livelihood programmes for the youth that engender filling in the labour void.

So far, EPVS has trained nearly two thousand women, which include both part-time as well as full-time workers. Of these, two fifty have been successfully placed with employers. The programme has undergone many revisions in its concept and design, since inception. Presently, Empower Pragati has operations in Delhi-NCR and Ahmedabad. This case study covers the group that was mobilized in March 2013 at Paharganj in Delhi.

Background

The major issue with any livelihood related programme for urban poor is not just the availability of services but access to services. These workers are restricted to a certain area and cannot go far off for training or work. Commuting being a serious concern, both in terms of cost and time, the programme had to be delivered keeping this constraint in mind.

Socio-economic Outlook of Paharganj

Paharganj is a neighbourhood of Central Delhi located west of New Delhi railway station. A well known market place, it is one of the three administrative subdivisions of the Central Delhi district. Popular for its hotels, Paharganj is especially popular among backpackers and low-cost travellers. It is perhaps the biggest hub of budget hotels for foreign tourists in Delhi.

However, with rising congestion, proliferation of bars, and increasing illegal activities like, drug peddling, the area has also become a hotspot for crime as well as a hideout for criminals. A sizeable population here constitutes of migrants from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, and West Bengal.

Table 2: Socio-economic Indicators for Paharganj

Socio-economic indicator	Paharganj
Sex ratio	800/1000
Dependency ratio	48.60%
Work participation rate	44.50%
Female work participation rate	11%
Male work participation rate	72%

Poor Urban Women

For migrant population, relocation and displacement often leads to challenges of sustained access to livelihoods, wherein women have to bear the brunt. Poor urban women, for whom survival itself is a struggle, need basic necessities such as nutritious food, clean drinking water, access to education, healthcare and opportunities for skill acquisition, and access to income generating activities.

Therefore, success of programmes targeted at urban poor women require cooperation and coordination between the government and other social actors like trade unions or an apex body that recognizes the rights of domestic workers.

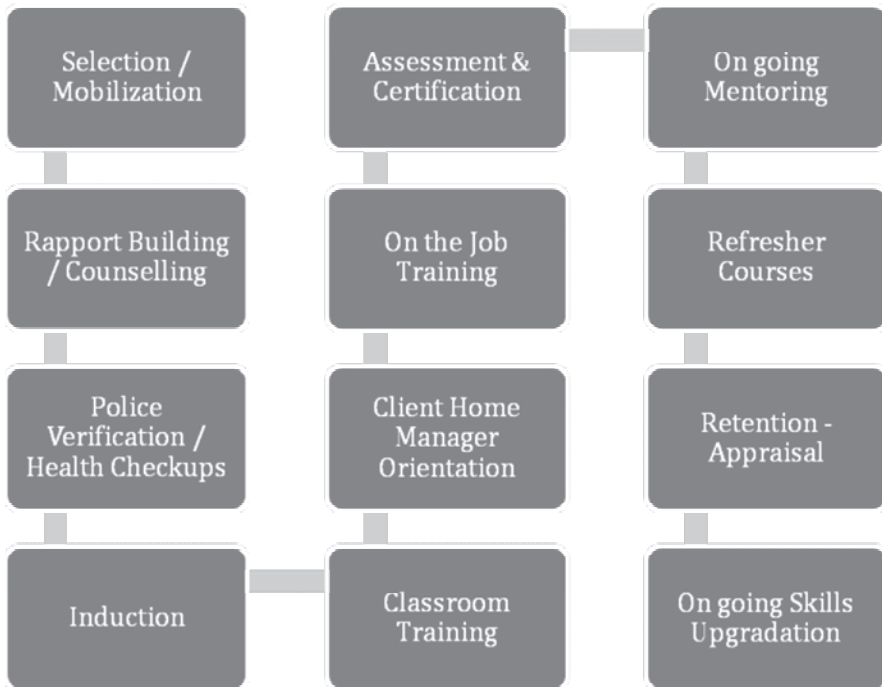
NGOs with skilled manpower and resources can bring to the table capabilities like research, access to target population, time-tested means of mobilization for a specific population, and linkages to other welfare measures.

Paharganj area has shelters and homes, run by various NGOs, mainly working for women and children. Maitri India is a New Delhi-based developmental humanitarian NGO that is committed to facilitating citizenship rights, basic services, dignity, and respect for the most vulnerable populations in India.

In this context, EPVS decided to partner with Maitri to reach out to the target population and deliver its programme in Paharganj area.

Overview of the Home Manager Concept

The Home Manager Model



Benefits to Domestic Worker and Employer

Benefits to Trainee	Benefits to the Client
Individual identity and a dignified job	Reliable resource with self-respect
Formal employment with structured salary	Resource without daily crisis and worries
Health check-up and verification by police	Safe and healthy resource
Builds self-esteem and individual capacity	Further improvement in capabilities possible
Continuous improvement process	Forum for client feedback and response
Choice to work at client residence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-time (24 x 7) • Part-time (12 hours a day) 	Flexibility to client depending upon requirement and resources available
Training from experts on <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housekeeping • Cooking • First Aid • Child Care • Patient Care • Communication skills • Use of Gadgets & Appliances, etc. 	Well trained resource in identified skills; Professional service standards; Consistent service-quality

Impact measurement

The impact of the programme on lives of women is measured in terms of following attributes:

Economic betterment	Personal enrichment
• Poverty alleviation	• Self confidence
• Entrepreneurship	• Better quality of life
• Control over income	• Decision making power
• Increased work participation	• Application of logic

The Home Manager Programme at Paharganj

Mobilization

For a company with no presence on the ground and lacking in community connect it was a challenge for EPVS to mobilize and create trust amongst vulnerable women to join the programme. Empower Pragati realized that it would make sense to partner with NGOs who were already working with women in Paharganj area.

While scouting for a partner NGO, EPVS came in contact with Maitri India, a New Delhi-based developmental humanitarian NGO that is committed

to facilitating citizenship rights, basic services, and respect for the most vulnerable populations in India.

When EPVS shared its programme objective with Maitri India, the two found synergy and a worthwhile purpose to pursue together. The programme was designed to be more accommodating to allow vulnerable women to overcome their constraints. Open for all women between ages eighteen and forty five years, EPVS set aside a set of eligibility criteria for recruitment in the Home Manager training programme at Paharganj.

- Domestic maids, underemployed or unemployed
- Neo literate or semi literate (Class V pass candidates preferred)
- Financially disempowered
- Physically fit

Maitri helped EPVS reach out to vulnerable women from their Homeless Resource Centre (HRC) and other similar projects. EPVS conducted counselling sessions for the target audience and finally shortlisted 20 women for the programme.

Table 3: List of enrolments in the Group at Paharganj

S. No.	Name	Education	Availability	Hours available	Expertise
1.	Neelam	8th Pass	1st May Onwards	4 hrs	Housekeeping
2.	Pinki	Literate	1st May Onwards	8 hrs and 12 Hrs	Housekeeping
3.	Radha Devi	Literate	1st May Onwards	4 hrs and 8 Hrs	Housekeeping
4.	Savitri	9th Pass	1st May Onwards	4 hrs	Housekeeping
5.	Jyoti	Literate	1st May Onwards	4 hrs	Housekeeping
6.	Abhilash	Literate	1st May Onwards	4 Hrs	Housekeeping
7.	Reeta Devi	Literate	1st May Onwards	4 Hrs	Housekeeping
8.	Sudesh	Literate	1st May Onwards	8 hrs	Housekeeping
9.	Asha	Literate	1st May Onwards	4 hrs and 8 Hrs	Housekeeping
10.	Savita	Literate	1st May Onwards	4 hrs and 8 Hrs	Housekeeping

Training programme

The total training duration of one hundred hours was distributed at no more than two hours everyday. On the basis of our researched model the training programme included:

- Life Skills and Personality Development,
- Home Maintenance,
- Financial Literacy,
- Basic Cooking,
- Housekeeping,
- Basic English,
- Patient Care, and
- Child Care (optional).

Picture 1: Geriatric and Patient Care



Picture 2: Session on Child Care



Placement

On successful completion of the Home Manager training programme, potential clients were identified and selected through

- Listing to reputed agencies for expectations and requirements,
- Directly approaching potential clients, i.e., offices and homes in the area,
- Placement in local classified advertisements and Business Directories, and
- Word of mouth campaigns through Maitri India staff.

An enquiry form was designed (see Annexure) in order to gather initial information from potential clients. As part of the programme design, coordinators visit homes of potential clients and interview them, following the gathering of information.

If the coordinators consider the client to be trustworthy, a contract outlining the rights and obligations is signed between the client and EPVS.

Profiles of trained Home Managers are matched with the requirements and preferences of the client, to find the best fit. The most suitable Home Manager is then placed with the client in accordance with the contractual terms.

Follow up and Grievance Redressal

At EPVS placement of the trainees is but only a significant step in the process that continues even afterwards. As per the company policy, a constant communication is meant to be established with the Home Manager for follow up action. Enquiries received from prospective clients are also filed.

A database file for each Home Manager containing details of training undergone, individual expertise, placement history, and attendance and salary records is maintained. This helps in tracking of each working relationship between the Home Manager and client.

Under the redressal mechanism of the Home Manager programme, grievances and complaints can be directly communicated by the client to the coordinators. Similarly, a Home Manager can also share their grievances with the coordinator. A digital file is maintained by EPVS that records complaints received from clients along with an action taken report.

Success Stories

Though stories of success are few, Empower Pragati has had its share of learning from the challenges it has faced so far. A couple of first-hand

experiences of Home Managers, trained by Empower Pragati, outline the successes and challenges. The personal accounts reflect the transformation their life has witnessed since joining the programme.

Sajdaa Khatoon

Sajdaa Khatoon belongs to Darbanga, Uttar Pradesh near Kanpur. She is twenty two years old. This young married woman was busy with household chores, serving her husband and his family members. The husband was unsupportive, disrespectful, and did not allow her to visit her parents. One day, he took her to Kanpur and left her behind in the city. She was clueless, scared, and depressed. One of her relatives referred her to a community counsellor in Kanpur. He convinced her to join the Home Manager programme at Empower Pragati.

Sajdaa joined the Home Manager programme at EVPS training centre in Gurgaon. The one hundred fifty hours training schedule included theoretical and practical lessons in housekeeping, laundry, basic cooking, and introductory child and geriatric care. She received a health clearance certificate stating that she had no communicable disease and a police verification of her bona-fide address and past criminal record, which was found to be negative.

After completing her training, Sajdaa opted to work for full-time for Mrs. Arora at her New Delhi residence. She was appointed for a probationary period with Empower Pragati at a minimum wage of Rs. 6500 per month. Empower Pragati adds Rs. 479 as PF and Rs. 166 as ESIS contribution.

As a Home Manager with a monthly income, Sajdaa feels happy and more secure. She now has greater self-reliance and an improved self-esteem. The client too is happy with her work and has given good feedback about her. Mrs Arora has also helped Sajdaa reconnect with her parents.

Baby Kumari

Baby Kumari is a nineteen years year old girl from Kanpur, U.P. Her family comprises of six siblings and her parents. Her father was the only earning member in her family. It was very difficult for her family to make their ends meet. Due to their poor socio-economical condition Baby and her siblings had an uncertain future.

One day she got in touch with the community counsellor in Kanpur who introduced her to Empower Pragati. She came to our training centre in Gurgaon, and enrolled into our Home Manager programme.

Initially, she was nervous and worried about her future. She did not open up easily. But the classes on motivation and life skills during the

training really helped her come out of her shell. She was trained in housekeeping, laundry, basic cooking, and introductory child and geriatric care. She received a health clearance certificate stating that she had no communicable disease and a police verification of her bona-fide address and past criminal record, which was found to be negative.

After her training Baby joined full-time work with Mrs. Preeti Agarwal in New Delhi. She was appointed for a probationary period with Empower Pragati at a monthly salary of Rs. 6500. Empower Pragati adds Rs. 479 as PF contribution and Rs. 166 as ESIS contribution.

It is over a year now, that she has been working for Mrs. Preeti Agarwal. Through her training and employment, she has evolved into a confident and self-assured professional. Thus, her life has changed significantly over a period of time and she has also been able to save a sufficient part of her income.

These success stories encourage Empower Pragati to surge ahead in the direction of developing a sustainable livelihood model for the so far neglected domestic workers.

Impact of the Programme on Target Group

The Home Manager programme was envisaged at EPVS to alleviate the misery of poor vulnerable urban and rural women through skill and competency building. The programme also sought to improve their access to various services. The Home Manager programme empowered those recruited for the training by

- a) Appropriate skilling and competency building;
- b) Building self-esteem and dignity, through offering full-time employment on company rolls, as against the present day practise of 'unorganized' employment;
- c) Introducing domestic workers to organized banking system, remitting their salaries into their bank accounts, and encouraging them to increase their savings;
- d) Training the women on life skills and personal hygiene in addition to other competencies (As a rub-off these practices are likely to improve living conditions and quality of life at their own homes as well);
- e) Planning for their children's education and their own financial security with the help of more predictable incomes;
- f) Accessing quality and reliable health care through ESIS, which EPVS subscribes for the Home Managers; and
- g) Fostering a culture of savings by subscribing to provident fund scheme (A security net in case of any eventualities and encourages

women to save for the 'rainy day').

However, the most desirable of outcomes of any skilling and empowerment programme, vis-à-vis, gainful employment at the end of the training schedule, has not yet blessed the newly trained Home Managers from Paharganj despite best efforts of EPVS.

Challenges and Lessons Learnt

It is well appreciated that for a majority, domestic work is not a career choice or ambition. At best it is just a means of survival. The programme did not attempt to lure women into being domestic servants, to cater to the growing demand. Instead, Home Manager programme at EPVS is an effort to provide minimum employable skills to underprivileged migrant women keeping in mind their educational level (or lack of it) and the socio-economic background.

Challenges in Mobilization

This was a major challenge in the initial stages of the project. Reaching out to the women in urban slums and convincing them about the training was an uphill task. Initially, a lot of problems were faced in this area due to lack of on-ground experience with mobilizing that target group.

- Understandably, women had doubts, questions, and apprehensions.
- The earning expectation was and continues to be high.
- Importance of training and skilling is not seen as a requirement in the target group.
- Most of the target group did not have time in the day to attend the training sessions while scheduling classes at odd hours was also not practical for them.

Mobilizing the first group with the help of Maitri India made things easier. However, it did take a lot of time and needed constant follow up. While Maitri was active in Paharganj, it is not always easy to locate an organization that enjoys a good rapport with the community.

Placement

Even after training, the placement has not been easy. Numerous issues like finding appropriate clients, availability of the right Home Manager (matching of work hours), location of workplace, salary structure, etc. had to be dealt with as they emerged as a challenge.

Despite these challenges, there have been a few placements (only two out of twelve) in another group that was trained in parallel elsewhere in Delhi. For better placement results, Home Manager as a concept needs to catch up in urban agglomeration like Delhi.

Transformation

Simplistically put, the Home Manager programme aims at organizing the unorganized sector. However, this transition is not only in terms of economics, but also encompasses behavioural, social, and cultural evolutions. The shift has its positive effects on the quality of life of individual and her family too. While such a transition may seem feasible, a great deal of time, energy, and resources are required to actualize it.

Future plan

The Home Manager programme at Paharganj was a learning experience that taught EPVS through the challenges faced. Though the training did not culminate in a lot of placements, a majority of these women found a new perspective, higher self-esteem and improved self-confidence. These women now actively participate in decision-making on family matters.

“Vishwas hi nahi ho raha tha ki aisa kuch hoga. Lekin jab sach mein padhai kari toh acha laga. Naukri nai toh kuch seekha toh sahi” - Savita, Home Manager.

Encouraged by the response of these newly trained women, Empower Pragati has started a new programme at Tigri, in Sangam Vihar area of South Delhi despite the poor placement outcomes. This group of twenty women was recruited in collaboration with an NGO called Chetanalaya (see Annexure). EPVS approached Chetanalaya and shared its vision, which has a large overlap with theirs. Chetanalaya is the social action wing of Archdiocese of Delhi which is the concrete expression of the social concerns of the catholic church in the given geo-political and socio-economic context.

ANNEXURE 1

About Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY)

The *Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana* (SJSRY), targeting the urban poor population, was launched in 1997, subsuming three previous schemes for urban poverty alleviation, namely,

- Nehru Rozgar Yojana (NRY),
- Urban Basic Services for the Poor (UBSP), and
- Prime Minister's Integrated Urban Poverty Eradication Programme (PMIUPEP).

The *Yojana* (SJSRY) in Delhi targets the urban population living below the poverty line, as defined (and updated periodically) by the government for the NCT of Delhi.

One of the key objectives of SJSRY is to support skill development and training programmes enabling urban poor to access employment opportunities opened up by the market or undertake self-employment under the Skill Training for Employment Promotion amongst Urban Poor (STEP-UP).

As a major component of SJSRY, STEP-UP aims at the following objectives.

- Poverty alleviation in urban areas by facilitating skill development.
- Well structured market-oriented programs to enable the poor and unskilled, employable as wage workers or successful micro-entrepreneurs.
- Promoting economic growth and contribution of the urban economy to national GDP.
- Ensuring a supply of appropriately skilled manpower at the lower end, thus enabling inclusive growth.

While the initial response was good with a large number of enrolments, the project suffered progressively higher drop-out rates. Unrealistic targets led to later disappointments, wherein alleged caste related discrimination and large expenditure turned into major issues.

About Maitri

Maitri India is a New Delhi-based developmental humanitarian NGO that is committed to facilitating citizenship rights, basic services, dignity, and respect for the most vulnerable populations in India. Maitri attains its goal

of advancing social equity and promoting public health in India through education, community outreach, networking, and legal advocacy.

The organization was founded in 2005 by Gen. (Retd) Bhopinder Singh and Winnie Singh with the initial goal of generating a much needed awareness among personnel of the uniformed services and their families about health risks such as sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. Following its success in this initial objective, the organization expanded its reach through a variety of projects since 2007.

Some of Maitri's current initiatives include addressing the issue of violence against women (especially in the uniformed services), running victim support and victim to survivor programmes, and promoting dignity and support for abandoned elderly widows in Vrindavan (Mathura, India).

Some of Maitri's other initiatives include improving the health and welfare of vulnerable migrant populations like rickshaw pullers and the homeless and providing educational and skill-enhancement opportunities for underprivileged children and women respectively.

Maitri also runs an Integrated Counselling and Testing Centre (ICTC) for HIV/AIDS, manages a Homeless Resource Centre (HRC) in Central Delhi and New Delhi districts, and facilitates workshops on adolescent issues in schools.

About Chetanalaya

After independence and partition of India, various types of migrations took place. The poor, illiterate, under-employed, and unemployed from other villages and towns were flocking to Delhi for a better life. Illiterate, uneducated, and untrained, they were unable to find worthwhile employment opportunities. They were used to farm related activities and seldom could they find any such opening in Delhi. As a result a number slums and unauthorized colonies began to mushroom. NGOs of various types began to be formed for social work.

In this context, the Diocesan Social Action was mandated to coordinate rehabilitation works. All these developments were challenging Social Action to respond. Run by Diocesan Social Action, Chetanalaya engages in programs for promotion of education, protection of child rights, gender mainstreaming, community healthcare and sustainable livelihood.

With the help of trained resources from Chetanalaya, EPVS was able to mobilize and enrol a twenty unemployed and underprivileged migrant women in Tigri in Sangam Vihar area of New Delhi. Currently, Chetanalaya is assisting in mobilizing women for another group in the area, as there has been considerable interest among the community women in this programme.

ANNEXURE 2

Client Primary Enquiry Form

(Presently, EPVS is using a modified version of this enquiry form)

Details of the Residence : (approx area in sq.ft./sq.mtrs)

Home Type	1 BHK	2 BHK	3 BHK	4 BHK	More
Flat					
Tenement					
Bungalow					

How did you come to know about Empower Home Manager Services ?

From a friend	Newspaper Advt	Newspaper write-up	Internet/Website	TV	Any other (pl.specify)

Services needed from a Home Manager (pl.tick appropriately – all are separately charged) :

Housekeeping	Cooking	Patient Care	Child Care	Geriatric Care	Any other (pl.specify)

HM services needed for No. of Working Hours per day : _____
(4 hours, 8 hours, 12 hours)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

(You may also send your enquiries by email, placement@empowerpragati.in,
info@empowerpragati.in)

Help Line: 011 49556000/622

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