

**CEC Working Paper**

**Labour Rights and Sportswear Production  
in India**

*A Study of Soccer Ball Industry in Jalandhar*

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction and Methodology**

Sports goods industry in India has been growing in terms of value and quantum of export. At present India's share in the global market is 1 percent and about 60 percent of the goods produced here are exported<sup>1</sup>. Since the last few years a consistent double-digit growth in exports of sports goods and toys from India has been achieved. Value of exports of sports goods and toys increased from Rs. 395.11 crore in 2004-05 to Rs. 456.97 crores in 2005-06, a significant growth of 15.6 percent<sup>2</sup>. Besides, being an important foreign exchange earner, the sports goods industry in India also provides employment to a huge number of people.

Problems of workers in the sports goods in India industry are manifold and it is manifested in the form of insecurity of employment (as the production is restricted to 6-7 months) low wages, low bargaining power and unhygienic and unsafe work place. Evidences from various export oriented manufacturing sectors in India prove to it. The existing provisions in the Indian labour laws are not adequately covering the workers in sports goods production, largely due to its informal work organisation. Similarly other mechanisms like CSR measures are also not addressing the issue of labour rights or wages in the Industry.

### **Rationale and Scope of the Study**

The present study is part of a collaborative exercise to highlight the working conditions in the sports goods manufacturing sector in Asia. Findings of the study will feed into the ongoing international Olympics campaign. This reports attempts to examine the nature of export oriented sports goods industry, its linkages with international brands and market, nature of production organisation along the value chain, production relations and working conditions at various levels and issues of labour rights violations as well as the existing mechanisms to ensure labour rights, specifically in the Indian context. Against this backdrop the study has the following specific objectives.

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<sup>1</sup> For Details, see Sports goods industry in India available at <http://www.intermesh.net/sports-goods.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.sporting-goods-industry.com/manufacturing-region-india/>

- To understand the dynamics of soccer ball production chain within the cluster
- To assess the compliance of labour standards in the soccer ball industry both in the context of existing national legislation as well as CSR initiatives
- To understand how far the present CSR implementation has addressed labour issues in this sector

### **Methodology**

The broad issues in the present study include mapping of the supply chain from raw materials to the finished products, product segments and how producers access final markets. The study is conducted along the production chain of the sports goods manufacturing industry in Jalandhar, Punjab. Jalandhar is the most important and oldest cluster of Sports goods production in India. It has a history of 120 years of sports goods manufacturing. Over 500 exporting enterprises are located in and around Jalandhar. Export in 2004 touched \$100 Million and 43 percent of this was football. Jalandhar is also a place where the CSR initiative of the Sports Goods Federation of India (SGFI) is located.

The study is qualitative in nature and involves both primary and secondary research. Case studies and discussions are the methods used for primary research. Case studies, based on specific issues are conducted among workers at three level of the production chain i.e. at factory level where production is happening on a large scale and at the workshop and home based levels, which are sub contracted production spots. Therefore primary study is focused on workers at three levels of value chain, management at different levels, trade unions/workers organizations and other significant bodies. A total of seventeen case studies, covering two factory based workers, three stitching centre workers, eight home based workers, three contractors and one SGFI workers, are conducted to analyse issues of labour rights for workers. Discussions were held with three trade union leaders, one each from Centre of Indian Trade Union (CITU), All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC). Besides, discussions were held with management of five soccer ball manufacturing and exporting companies as well as Sports Goods Foundation of India (SGFI), Sports Goods Manufacturers and Exporters Association and representatives of Sports Goods Promotion Council of India. A brief desk research using primary and secondary documented

evidences is also conducted in order to get the macro picture and also to supplement/cross check the field information collected.

## **Chapter II: Soccer Ball Production in Jalandhar: Production Organisation, Labour Relations and Conditions of Work**

*“I will leave this job, if I get a better one. I have no savings, but large debt and there is always uncertainty of work. I really do not want to turn my home to a workplace and I cannot imagine my children engaging in soccer ball stitching. But I have to wait and see where the fate takes me to”. - Rakesh, stitching centre worker, Dilbag Nagar, Jalandhar*

*“We have no saving so there is nothing left during emergencies. Contractors do not give us any advance payment. I took money from lender at an interest of 10 percent. I have done it many times. I have lost the gold of my wife and some household articles, which I gave as security to moneylender and I could not repay. Once I even rented my cooking gas cylinder to arrange some money for a health emergency of my wife. The situation is similar for all. One of my friends even sold his blood to get some extra money to meet an emergency. Most of the workers sold their houses due to indebtedness and are now staying in rented houses”. - Kishan, home based worker, New Rasila Nagar, Basti Danishmandan, Jalandhar*

*“You do not need any proof from labour inspector, testimony from any company or brand or any inspection report of SGFI volunteers to prove child labour in Basti Danishmandan. Just look at the fingers of our children. You will see the dark dead cells on their thumbs and needle pricks on their forefingers. These are not the marks of their playfulness, but marks of their hardships. You look around our Basti, you will not see any children playing and in fact, they have no playgrounds left. All places are occupied by Companies and we feel like living inside a factory”. - A home based worker, Jalandhar who does not wish to reveal his name*

Soccer ball production is a highly labour intensive one. This present study based on primary survey in and around Jalandhar, Punjab looked into the structure of production organisation, labour relations, prices and wages, social and economic profile of workers, working conditions, unionisation and extent of collective bargaining. It also attempts to capture the processes of price negotiation, applicability of labour laws and other existing measures of corporate social responsibility in the soccer ball production industry.

### **Soccer Ball Industry in India**

A survey of literature and available industry information show that Sporting Goods industry is about one hundred and sixteen years old in India. It is spread over the length



and breadth of the country. There are major manufacturing concentrations in and around Jalandhar, Delhi, Agra, Moradabad, Mumbai, Kolkata and Chennai. The Indian sports goods industry has expanded to include the areas of Meerut in UttarPradesh and Gurgaon in Haryana. At present the industry is cantered largely around Meerut and Jalandhar. Major export items include football and cricket gear, and athletic equipment. Both these cities together claim around 75 percent to 80 percent<sup>3</sup> of the total domestic production with more than 3000 manufacturing units, including around 130 exporters.

The share of India in Sports goods export is notably high and after Pakistan India is one of the main producers of inflatable balls and 60 percent<sup>4</sup> of the sports goods manufactured in India are exported (Table, 1.1). However, the global market share of India in this segment is barely 1 percent.<sup>5</sup> Most of India's sports goods are exported to the United Kingdom, The United States of America, Germany, France and Australia. There are around 182 registered sports goods exporters<sup>6</sup> with the Sports Goods Export Promotion Council (SGEPC) alone (Table, 1.2). Now with increased focus on modern, value added and technology-based items, this high-potential industry promises to forge ahead in the international sports goods market.

Table 1.1: Component share in total exports (2005-06)

No	Items	Percentage to total sports goods
1	Inflatable balls	37 % approx
2	Cricket equipment	15 % approx
3	Boxing equipment	7 % approx
4	Others	41% approx

Source: Sports Goods Export Promotion Council Annual Report (2005-06)

Table 1.2: Sector wise export trend of sports goods and toys (2005-06)

No	Destination	Percentage to total sports goods export
1	Europe	50.72
2	United States of America (USA)	21.25
3	Australia	15.33
4	Africa	4.56
5	Central South East & Far East Asia	3.69
6	Middle East & Arabian Gulf	3.58

<sup>3</sup>Industry Overview, Sports Goods Industry in India, available @ <http://www.sporting-goods-industry.com/manufacturing-region-india/>

<sup>4</sup> Sports Goods, available @ <http://www.intermesh.net/sports-goods.html>

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

<sup>6</sup> Sports Goods Export Promotion Council of India (2006), 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Report 2005-06

7	East Europe	0.87
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Source: Sports Goods Export Promotion Council Annual Report (2005-06)

### **Soccer ball production and export from Jalandhar**

Soccer ball production in Jalandhar is for both export and domestic market. The study, however, focuses only on production for export market. The history of soccer ball production in Jalandhar could be traced back to the pre-independence period of India. Jalandhar and Silakot (Now in Pakistan) had been the major centres of production of soccer balls. Jalandhar has emerged as a major centre of production and export after India-Pakistan partition in 1947. Since then, Jalandhar has been an important location of the production and export of soccer balls from India. Estimates of Sports Goods Export Promotion Council of India show that there are 500 exporting firms in Jalandhar, which export sports goods including soccer balls.<sup>7</sup> Export of other sports goods is also significant from Jalandhar. In the year 2000-2001 the exports measured USD 54 million, which increased to USD 65 million in 2002-03. In the year 2003-04 the figure touched USD 100 million<sup>8</sup>. Soccer ball holds a significant share in the total export of sports goods from Jalandhar. Table 1.1 shows that out of the total export of sports goods, soccer ball alone accounted for 43 percent during 2003-04 (Table, 1.3).

Table 1.3: Product wise export break of key product categories during 2003-04

Items	% Share in exports
Footballs	43
Protective Equipment for Boxing, Cricket and Hockey	17
Other Hockey and Cricket related equipment	15
Others (Hammocks, Golf Balls, General Exercise Equipment, Fishing Equipment, etc.)	25

Source: <http://www.sportsbsm.com/About%20the%20Expo.html>

The export is mainly to countries of European Union, Asia, Caribbean and North America, Australia and New Zealand, Africa and South America. However, major share of sports goods export is to European Union with 42 percent of the total followed by Caribbean and North America, Australia and New Zealand with 18 percent each (Table 1.4).

Table 1.4: Export destination of sports goods from Jalandhar

Market	Percentage Share
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<sup>7</sup> For Details see, Sports Goods Export Promotion Council- 48<sup>th</sup> Annual Report 2005-06

<sup>8</sup> For details, see, Sports Goods Export from India, available at <http://www.sportsbsm.com/About%20the%20Expo.html>

European Union	42%
Asia	12%
Caribbean and North & Central America	18%
Australia and New Zealand	18%
Africa	6%
South America	4%

Source: <http://www.sportsbsm.com/About%20the%20Expo.html>

In Jalandhar, various establishments are engaged in the manufacturing of sports goods for the domestic market. Following are the major three kinds of establishments.<sup>9</sup>

1. **Big establishments:** These are generally geared to exports besides catering to the domestic market.
2. **Small establishments:** These usually manufacture sports goods for the domestic market. Both the big establishments as well as the small establishments are registered either under the Factories Act, 1948, or under the Shops and Establishment Act of the state of Punjab.
3. **The unregistered units:** These are found particularly in the urban pockets of Jalandhar. These units are mostly small home-based units which are usually run by the family members, but at times with the help of a couple of hired employees. These units do not have a direct access to market. It has been seen that many a times when the big establishments - especially exporters - are not able to cope with large orders from their foreign clients, distribute a share of the production to these small unregistered, home- based units.

### **Changing Production Organisation in the Soccer Ball Industry**

Production of Soccer Balls in Jalandhar has witnessed many changes over a period of time. Earlier, the material mainly used was leather and the production was entirely done by hands. As, *Kishal Lal*, an affiliate of Lal Janda Workers Union (CITU), who has been working as a soccer ball stitcher for the last 45 years observes, “the work was entirely factory and stitching centre based before 30 years. Workers used to stitch in factories in large numbers. Work was also done in stitching centres where ten to thirty workers worked. Demand for skilled workers was so high during that period and workers were

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<sup>9</sup> Sports Goods Industry in Jalandhar, A Background, available @ [http://jalandhar.nic.in/html/sports\\_goods\\_industry.htm](http://jalandhar.nic.in/html/sports_goods_industry.htm)

even given advance salaries by the employers. The living conditions of workers were also better compared to other industries”.

Factory and stitching centre-based production in which workers had direct contract with the employer continued till 1977. The nature of production has changed after 1977 and factories started outsourcing production to home based settings, however engaging the workers directly. *Kishan Lal* recollects, “in the name of introduction of new machineries and materials such as rubber and PVC, factories started encouraging production in the families of the workers. Market demand was also high that period. Since the number of workers engaged in soccer ball stitching was less, it had to make use of other available family members including children for soccer ball stitching”.

When examined closely, it could be understood that the shift of production to home based setting was the first step towards engaging children in soccer ball stitching. It was to compensate the shortage of workforce against the booming demand in the international market of that time. The shift in 1977 therefore brought family labour including children to older adults into football stitching. Though soccer ball stitching had been completely shifted to stitching centres and home based settings by 1977, workers had direct relationship with the factories in terms of taking orders and payments without any intermediary. It continued till 1986 and contractors came into the scene thereafter.

There were many notable changes happened with regard to soccer ball production after the emergence of intermediary contractors. Most important one is on the role of trade unions. Till 1986 trade unions had been playing a significant role in rate negotiation between workers and the factories. The contractor system in soccer ball production undermined and bypassed trade unions. Subsequently workers and their representatives lost their control on fixing rates for soccer ball stitching. In the new system, most of the manufacturers engaged in direct contract with the contractors and workers eventually came under the contractors without any direct relationship with the principal employer, i.e. factories. *Ram Murti Singh*, General Secretary, Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) and Lal Jhanda Sports Workers Union, Punjab says, “there were very strong presence of trade unions before 30 years. Unions were instrumental in revising the rates

of stitching and also for dealing with any unfair labour practices. We see that the shift towards home-based production in soccer ball was part of the management strategy to reduce cost of production by engaging family labour and to weaken trade unionism among workers. Managements by the legitimisation of contractor system have escaped from the labour laws". The main unions involved were AITUC, CITU and INTUC till the year 1986. After that, union activities got weakened and workers were gradually terminated from work. *Chaman Lal*, member of Lal Jhanda Sports Workers Union notes, "the management association started bypassing trade unions in rate negotiations. Contractors became the main actors and workers also changed to small contractors. Status of worker changed from firm based to home based and systematically taken out of the purview of laws of regulation and the production chain became complex".

Emergence of contractor system had had an impact on the labour relations at large. Firstly it entirely informalised the work through decentralising production processes by the systematic division of labour. Process of production also witnessed divergences significantly from factory to factory. Survey of five companies revealed that there are noticeable differences in work organisation, production processes and pricing for stitching for similar qualities of balls produced for the same brands. This will be discussed in detail in the section on pricing and wages. Secondly, it scattered the work force and restricted the normal processes of unionisation and collective bargaining, which is around a factory and directly with factory management. Thirdly, it took away the control of workers in deciding the pricing of their stitching.

The present study specifically looked five major manufacturing and exporting companies based in Jalandhar to understand production practices in detail. It attempted to trace the production organisation of five major soccer ball manufacturing and exporting companies which are supplying to brands such as *Mitre, Dunlop, Decathlon, Ross, Reebok, Adidas, Puma, Gilbert and clubs like and clubs like Arsenal, Manchester United, Chelsea and Liverpool*. These companies studied are a) Beat All Sports, b) Wintex Exports, c) Soccer International, d) Hansraj Mahajan and Sons Ltd. and e) Rattan Brothers.

**I Beat all Sports, Beat All Sports S-97-114-115 Industrial Area Jalandhar, Jalandhar, Punjab, India**

*Beat All Sports* is a sports goods manufacturing and exporting company producing soccer balls, cricket bats, hockey sticks, Rugby balls, netballs, volleyballs, bibs, pumps and leather balls.<sup>10</sup> Established in 1935, the Company produces for brands, which have markets in North America, South America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Eastern Asia, Southeast Asia, Mid East, Africa and Oceania. Major brands buying from the Company are Decathlon and Ross. The Company's current investment in plant and machinery is Rs.44 Lacs. The production capacity for different types of inflatable balls is 500 to 1000 per day.<sup>11</sup> As per one of the senior management persons, the company's sales turn over was Rs.13 crore during 2006-07. The company is a member of Sports Goods Foundation of India (SGFI) and World Federation of Sporting Goods Industry (WFSGI)

The production in the factory is largely export oriented. The division between domestic and export sales is of the tune of 25:75.<sup>12</sup> Brands like Decathlon and Ross place their order two to three times a year. However when any international events like World Cup and Olympics are near, the production of inflatable balls increases by around 30 percent.<sup>13</sup>

There is a clear division of labour in the production process of soccer ball in *Beat All Sports*. The workforce is divided into core and periphery, of which core section constitutes of workforce at the management level to panel cutters<sup>14</sup>. The periphery is comprised of workers on contractual appointments directly by the factory, contractors and their workers at the stitching centres and home based settings. As *R. K. Kohli* of *Beat All Sports* observes, "30 percent of the workers inside the factory are on contract who are appointed for a fixed term and working on piece rate". Production processes after panel

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<sup>10</sup> For more details, see Company Profile, Beat All Sports, available at <http://www.alibaba.com/company/10431887.html>

<sup>11</sup> Interview with R. K. Kohli of Beat All Sports, Jalandhar.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Panel cutting, which is a highly skilled work, is one of the processes of cutting the material, which may be rubber, PVC or PV. The material is cut into pieces with the help of a machine, which is manually operated. There are soccer ball of 18 and 32 panels.

cutting and preparation of soccer ball kits<sup>15</sup> is entirely carried out by the contractors. This is carried out largely in home-based settings. As per the information from the management of the company there are eighteen small contractors who are taking stitching work from the company. These contractors then further sub-contract to households where production takes place. In addition to that some of the contractors run stitching centres. Exact number of stitching centres under this company is not available.

## **II WINTEX Exports, G. T. Road, Suranussi, Jalandhar, Punjab**

Established in 1988 *WINTEX Export* has been manufacturing and exporting sporting goods for well over 13 years. It has a product range including rugby balls, soccer balls, net balls, volley balls, beach volley balls, Aussie rules footballs, touch balls and hand balls.<sup>16</sup> *WINTEX* is a 100 percent export oriented unit and is catering to top international companies worldwide including brands such as Mitre, Dunlop, Decathlon and Ross. The company exports to markets in United Kingdom, USA, Canada, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia and Europe. The company has regular buyer with regularly drawn contracts. A single brand places an order 2 times a year. When price of a particular product is fixed for an order it remains the same even if the prices of raw materials increase. The company is a member of Sports Goods Foundation of India (SGFI) and World Federation of Sporting Goods Industry (WFSGI)

The *WINTEX* factory has complete infrastructure for production of all kinds of inflatable balls. The production capacity for the different types of inflatable balls is 2500 to 4000 per day.<sup>17</sup> In soccer ball, the company produces professional match quality balls<sup>18</sup>, match quality balls of size 3, 4 and 5<sup>19</sup> and training balls.<sup>20</sup> Like other factories, production of soccer balls in *WINTEX* is carried out in a production chain, which is segregated into both in-house and outside production. In-house production includes processing of raw materials, panel cutting, screen-printing and preparation of soccer ball kits. However, the

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<sup>15</sup> Soccer ball kit is a complete set of material that includes panels and bladder ready for stitching.

<sup>16</sup> For more details, see, *WINTEX Export*, available at <http://www.wintexexports.com/about.htm>

<sup>17</sup> Interview with Mr. Sachin Mahajan of *WINTEX Exports*

<sup>18</sup> Professional match quality ball is a high quality ball based on Poly Vinyl with multi polyester lamination. This is largely used for international matches

<sup>19</sup> Match quality ball is based on Carbonium PU material. It has a latex bladder with less lamination.

<sup>20</sup> Training balls are based on Poly Vinyl Chloride (PVC) material with latex or butyl bladder. It is used largely for training purposes.

company claims that it performs all production processes including stitching in-house.<sup>21</sup> This is not found to be fully true and field study among the home based workers revealed that stitching of soccer ball for *WINTEX* is performed both in stitching centres and home based settings intermediated through contractors.

### **III Soccer International, Basti Sheikh Road Jalandhar, Punjab**

*Soccer International* is manufacturing and exporting a variety of hand-stitched professional inflatable balls like soccer balls, volleyballs, netballs, rugby balls, handball and mini balls. The company also produces soccer shin pads, soccer goalkeeper gloves and soccer bags.<sup>22</sup> The company produces soccer ball for brands such as Mitre, Gilbert and clubs like Arsenal and Manchester United. Soccer ball produced are largely exported to markets in UK, Germany, U.S.A., and Australia. In India, the company sells soccer ball under the brand name of VECTOR X. The company is a member of Sports Goods Foundation of India (SGFI) and World Federation of Sporting Goods Industry (WFSGI).

Production of soccer balls in *Soccer International* is largely carried out in stitching centres and home based settings. The contractors collect soccer ball kits, which is ready for stitching from the factory and sub-contract to households. Some contractors have their own stitching centres, which are supported by the factory. As *Mr. Ragesh Thapa*, General Secretary Punjab Sports Goods Workers Union (Affiliated to AITUC), observes, “stitching centres are nothing but the extended wing of the factories. Though it is apparently managed by the respective contractor, the company is providing all the infrastructure support to the stitching centres. It is nothing but to escape from the provisions of factory act, which insist the registration of units. Workers do not know the fact”. There are around 16 contractors and around 250 stitchers directly or indirectly working with the Company.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> As mentioned in the company website <http://www.wintexexports.com/home.htm> and interview with Mr. Sachin Mahajan of *WINTEX Exports*

<sup>22</sup> For details see, <http://www.indianindustry.com/cgi-local/profile.cgi?ss=Netball&supp=ind&biztyp=exp&cid=3qcFnZzW&ismap=yes&tradeinfo=yes&modid=IIND&country=India&nofemp=5000&from=search&city=Jalandhar&comp=Soccer+International+Ltd%2E&compid=3qoEnZg=&cidx=3qoEnZg=&companyx=Soccer+International+Ltd%2E,%20Jalandhar>

<sup>23</sup> Interview with Mr. Ragesh Thapa, General Secretary Punjab Sports Goods Workers Union, Jalandhar



#### **IV Hansraj Mahajan and Sons Ltd., G. T. Road Suranussi, Jalandhar, Punjab**

*Hansraj Mahajan & Sons Ltd.* was started in 1925. The company is registered as a small-scale industry but the company does not avail any benefit from the SSI. The company produces variety of sports goods, which includes inflatable balls (Soccer Ball, Hand Ball and Rugby Ball), cricket equipments and hockey sticks and balls.<sup>24</sup> The company is a member of Sports Goods Foundation of India (SGFI).

The production capacity for the different types of inflatable balls is 5000 per day, cricket bat 200 per day and hockey sticks 200 per day. Major brands, which are buying from the Company, are Dunlop, Slazenger, Dita, Mitre, The Foodstuffs Group, and The Warehouse Group. Current export market of the Company includes Eastern Europe, North America, Mid East/Africa, Central/South America, Asia, Western Europe and Australasia. The company has an annual sales turnover of US\$1,000,000 to 1,999,999.<sup>25</sup>

Like other soccer ball producing Company, *Hansraj Mahajan and Sons* has a core and periphery level of work and production organisation. As per the information from the Company the total number of in-house staff is 249 including senior level management staffs to contract workers inside the company. In the production line, there are both contract and permanent workers engaged in work like, processing of raw material, panel cutting, screen printing, final preparation of soccer ball kits, checking and packing. It is reported that contract workers largely engaged in processes such as panel cutting and packing. In addition to that the company follows the contract-out system for the stitching of the balls mediated through contractors. In the periphery level, there are contractors; workers who are directly take stitching work from the Company, stitching centre workers as well as home based workers under contractors. The company said to have no direct labour and business relations with the stitching centre and home based workers.

#### **V Rattan Brothers Ltd, 94 Gakhhal Road, Basti Danish Mandan, Jalandhar, Punjab**

Established in 1930, *Rattan Brothers* manufactures and exports soccer balls, netballs, volleyballs, rugby balls, Australian & American Footballs, mini balls, softy balls, boxing

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<sup>24</sup> For more details, see, <http://hansraj.manufacturer.globalsources.com/si/6008802306582/Homepage.htm>

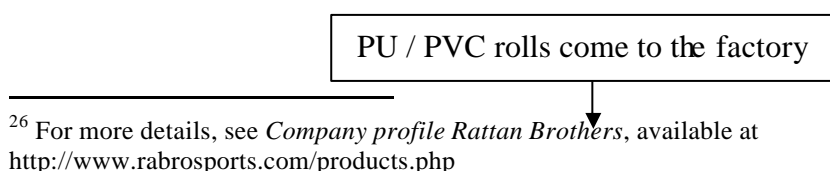
<sup>25</sup> Annual report (2006-07), Hansraj Mahajan and Sons, Ltd, available at <http://hansraj.manufacturer.globalsources.com/si/6008802306582.html>

equipments, cricket balls and accessories and hockey balls.<sup>26</sup> The company supplies soccer ball to brands including Regent, mitre and Dunlop. The company is a member of Sports Goods Foundation of India (SGFI).

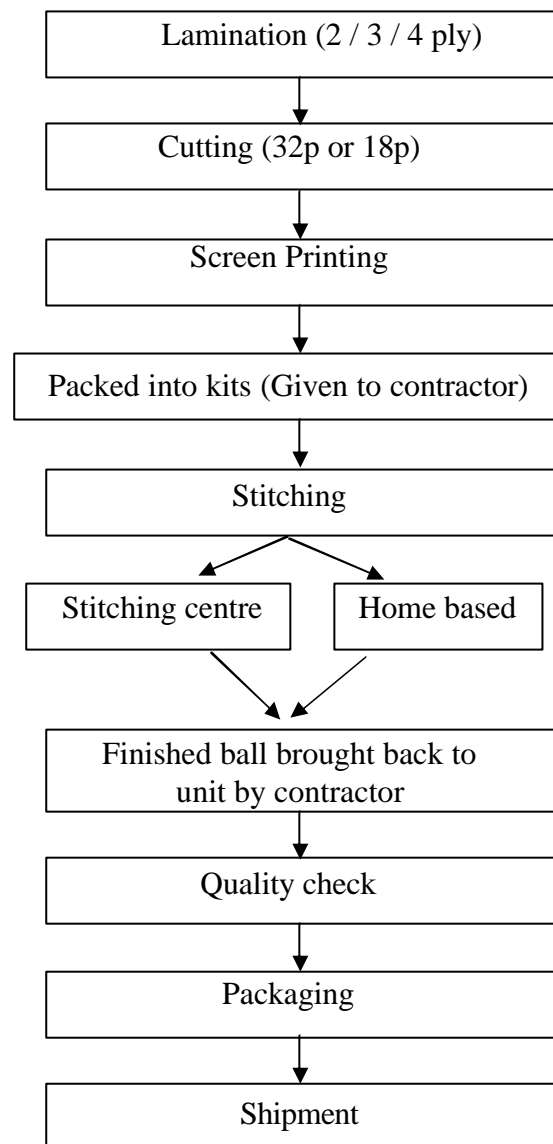
Production in Rattan brothers, like other companies is carried out both inside and outside the factory. Processes such as processing of raw materials, panel cutting, preparation of soccer ball kits, checking and packing are done inside the factory. Stitching of soccer balls is done outside the factory, largely in home-based settings. However, unlike other factories, there are no intermediary contractors in Rattan brothers as *Kishan Lal Thapa*, who has been stitching for *Rattan Brothers* for a long time, says. Despite engaging contractors, the company directly contracts out production to the workers who have been with the company for many years. *Kishan Lal* says, “ there are around 200 such workers who directly take work from the factory. It is notable that among them 80 are women”. The production is therefore limited to two levels in the factory i.e. factory and home-based settings.

A survey on the production processes and organisation in five soccer ball manufacturing and exporting companies reveals that production processes are more or less similar in all of these factories. However, there are considerable differences in production organisation depending upon the contractor system in the companies. In all the five factories there is a core and periphery layer of workforce. The core includes all managerial staff as well as workers appointed on permanent rolls. Periphery includes contract workers inside the factory, contractors and workers under the contractor both in stitching centres and households. In all the factories surveyed processes such as lamination, cutting, screen-printing, quality check and packing are done inside the factory. Stitching of soccer ball in all factories is outsourced to big contractors, small contractors or to workers. The production processes of soccer balls is summarised in chart 1.1.

Chart 1.1: production process of Soccer Ball in India



<sup>26</sup> For more details, see *Company profile Rattan Brothers*, available at <http://www.rabrosports.com/products.php>



*Source: Primary Survey and Discussions with managements*

### **New forms of Work Organisation**

Earlier studies by National Institute of Labour (NLI) and Indian Committee of the Netherlands showed that soccer ball production in Jandhar is organised at multiple levels. As reported in the earlier studies the organisation of production of soccer ball to export market are as follows.<sup>27</sup>

- The foreign importers who give the ball specifications and designs and give the orders to manufacturers/exporters in India;

<sup>27</sup> For details, see, India Committee of the Netherlands (2000), *The Dark Side of Football, Child and Adult Labour in India's Football Industry and the Role of FIFA*, June, 2000

- Manufacturers /exporters who produce the made-to-order balls for different foreign companies;
- Factory-based workers who prepare the sheets and panels and do the screen printing; also final quality control and packing is done at the factory;
- Contractors who act as middlemen between the factory owners and the home-based workers and - a relatively recent phenomenon - supervisors who organize the stitching in the recently set up stitching centres;
- Home-based workers who sew together the prepared panels and give shape to the final ball and centre-based stitchers working under an exporter-appointed supervisor

However, the primary study shows that the production chain has been further sub-contracted or informalised in Jalandhar with the relocation of stitching centres managed by the contractors to outside the city of Jalandhar. Also there are instances of sub-contracting from big contractors to small contractors and home based workers to other households. In short, there is no set pattern of organisation in soccer ball production. In addition to the findings of the study by NLI and ICN, our primary survey in Jalandhar has identified following practices of production.

- There are workers who take work directly from the company other than contractors. They take 10 to 15 balls a day as per the number of family members involved in stitching.
- Big contractors take work in large numbers from the factories and carry out production in own stitching centres, directly through home-based workers and also sub-contract to small contractors
- Small contractors take work from big contractors as well as directly from factories and further outsource to home based workers
- Small contractors themselves stitch in their families, run stitching centres either inside the city or outside and sub-contract to home based production settings
- Small contractors fragmentise the production in some cases and get the work partially done by women and children (stitching only) and final closing of the ball by themselves or workers in stitching centres. This decreases the cost of stitching to a considerable extent.

- Production carried out in stitching centres outside the city where stitching charges are significantly low. There are also out-sourcing of stitching from these factories to households

### **Workforce in Soccer Ball Stitching in Jalandhar: A Profile**

According to the Sports Goods Manufacturers and Exporter's Association, the total number of persons working in the industry is about 30,000 in Jalandhar. The Christian Aid report, conversely gives a figure of around 300,000 people working in the industry, either in the 1,500 factories and smaller manufacturing units or as subcontracted home-workers'.<sup>28</sup> As per *Ram Murti*, General Secretary of CITU, total number of workers including workers inside the factory, stitching centres and in home-based settings in Jalandhar is around 350,000. This difference in numbers of the official and unofficial data is explained in the ICN report (2000) as the non-estimation of home-based workers in the informal sectors. There are also difficulties in estimating the exact number of people engaged in soccer ball production as in many cases they do stitching of soccer ball and rugby balls.

### **Socio-Economic Profile of Workers**

Earlier studies<sup>29</sup> show that almost three fourths of the households are headed by persons for whom home-based work was their principal source of income. The average family size of the households was 5.6. Four out of every ten households producing sports goods are headed by illiterate adults. Most stitchers are not only illiterate or semi-literate but also very poor. About 58 percent of urban and 36 percent of rural households are below the official poverty line, which, in 1998, was around Rs.433 for urban and Rs.300 for rural areas.<sup>30</sup> This is despite the fact that the average per capita income in the families is almost equal to the official poverty line. On average a family earned Rs.413 per month per capita: Rs.443 in urban and Rs.381 in rural areas. The study by National Labour Institute (NLI) pointed out that the living conditions of the families are extremely poor and almost two-thirds of the families, did not have a separate kitchen and toilet.

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<sup>28</sup> Christian Aid (1997), *A Sporting Chance - Tackling child labour in India's sports goods industry*, May 1997, page 3 as quoted in ICN report (2000)

<sup>29</sup> Secondary information on the socio-economic profile of soccer ball stitching workers is largely drawn from reports of Christian Aid (1997), National Institute of Labour (1998) and India Committee on Netherlands (2000).

<sup>30</sup> V.V. Giri National Labour Institute (1998), *Child Labour in the Sports Goods Industry; Jalandhar - A Case Study*, September 1998, NOIDA, India.

The NLI study also reveals that more than three-fourths of the surveyed households were Hindus, with a somewhat higher concentration of Hindus in the urban areas. Almost 10 percent of the households are Sikhs and 5 percent are Christian. Muslims and others make up the rest. In the primary survey, it is found that there are many social groups now involved in soccer ball stitching other than the traditional stitching communities. Discussions from the workers and trade unions revealed that soccer ball stitching is not now just confined to 'scheduled castes' as it was earlier, however all segments including economically poor section from the upper castes are now engaged in soccer ball stitching. The traditional soccer ball stitching communities largely belong to Scheduled Castes, namely *Ravidas, Chamar, Bhagat biradiri and Valmiki*. The study has identified upper castes, but economically poor, households of *Jats, Mahajans* and even *Brahmins* in soccer ball stitching in Jalandhar. Another group of people who are now engaged in soccer ball stitching is migrant workers from the states like, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. They mostly work in the stitching centres. Workers in soccer ball production in and around Jalandhar are socially and economically poor segments of the society.

### **Working and Living Conditions: Case Studies**

The following section attempts to shed light on the working and living conditions of soccer ball stitching workers in factories, stitching centres and home-based settings. Case are specifically analysed for each category of workers.

#### **I Factory Workers<sup>31</sup>**

##### ***I A. Raj , Basti Danishmandan, Jalandhar***

Raj (name changed), 46, a permanent worker working since 15 years with the panel-cutting section of Sat Prakash Ltd, a famous soccer ball manufacturer and exporter from Jalandhar. His parents came to Jalandhar in 1948 in search of work from Phalawala, bordering Kashmir and got involved in soccer ball stitching. His work involves preparing sheets (mixed with chemicals) and panel cutting. On an average he has to cut 100-125 kits for the 32-panel soccer ball and 500 kits for the Rugby ball.

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<sup>31</sup> Factory workers are those who are working inside the manufacturing cum exporting factories. They are either permanent or appointed on contract basis. They work as panel cutters, screen printers, quality checkers and packers

There are 50-60 workers, all men, are working inside the factory. There are seven workers involved in panel cutting. Workers work in shift (9 a.m-1 p.m. and 2 p.m.- 6 p.m.) with a tea break although tea is not provided. No appointment letter is given to these workers only a photo identity card is issued.

In the year 1992 the salary paid was Rs.1200/- and at present the salary is Rs.3800. There has been no new appointment since the last fifteen years. On record each workers salary is Rs.2450/- given in their pay slip that complies to the minimum wages. They receive Provident Fund, bonus and benefits under the ESI Scheme. Rs.250/- is deducted as their PF amount. There is no double wages for overtime, paid same as a day's work. However, instances of overtime were very less.

“Earning from the factory work alone is not enough to fulfil the need of the entire family. In order to earn some more, I take stitching work also from the factory. On an average I take ten soccer balls for stitching per day. My wife, mother and elder daughter do the stitching work at home”, he says. He gets Rs.35 for the stitching of a 32-panel good quality football and Rs.22 for two-ply rubber sheet of cheap quality ball. The mode of payment is monthly salary and for the home-based work, it is paid in two instalments in a month. He earns around Rs.6200 per month from salary and from stitching of balls. He gets benefits like PF, ESI and bonus, however he does not know his PF account number and the contribution made by the owner. “If I ask the manager he will say that the PF is deposited regularly, but the workers do not have any details of that,” he says. There have been incidences that the worker contribution is taken but it is not deposited into their account. “I am not at all happy with this work. The salary should be increased to at least Rs.10000. I do not want to take work home”.

### ***I B. Das, Basti Danishmandan, Jalandhar***

Das (name is changed) aged 50, is a football stitcher from Jalandhar. He has been associated with this profession for the last 30 years. At present he is working for Savi International and is working inside the factory premise but is piece rated worker. The working hours are from 9-6 pm.

He recollects “earlier when football were made of leather and panel cutting was done by hand but nowadays, the balls are made up of either PU/PVC and rubber and the panel cutting is done by machine. However today as workers are more and work is less the management therefore pays as per their will”.

He says, “prices of the football depend on the quality of the ball. Price of the same ball in stitching centre is more than in the household units”. He stitches a maximum of 10 balls in a day. The rates for the first quality rugby ball are 25.50 whereas that of the cheap quality is 23.50. The rates for soccer ball of the same quality are 40 and 30 respectively. Repairing cost of the balls has not has been increased for the last few years whereas the rate for stitching increases every year for each quality of ball. The rate increases between 0.25paise to 1.00 rupee depending on the quality of the ball.

He earns Rs.4500/ month but he finds it difficult to run his family in this amount. So to run his family he has given half of his house on rent so that he can run his family.

According to him he has to spend Rs.2.50 / ball in stitching so the actual earning per ball is Rs.2.50 less than what he gets. Some 3 years back the workers tried to form the union but some of the workers informed about this and this could not happen.

He complained for loss of eyesight and now he is using spectacle for clear vision. Other problems related to health were headache, acidity, pain in the joints and backache. Piercing of the needles had become a part of daily routine.

He said that only 34 percent of the workers inside the unit get benefits like PF, ESI and Bonus etc whereas rest of the workers are deprived of this. Moreover there are workers who are not getting even the minimum wages they are paid at a rate of Rs.72 / day.

The cases of Raj and Das reveal the conditions of work and its implications on the living conditions of workers inside the exporting and manufacturing factories of soccer balls. One striking thing is that, though the company claims that all workers inside the factory are getting benefits of provident fund, employee state insurance and minimum wages, workers in real terms are not getting the same. Similarly, the system of piece rate, which itself is an indication of precarious work is still being followed even inside the factory. There are no regulation or revision of wages for workers inside the factory. In both the cases, though the workers are doing overtime work, they are not getting wages as per the statutory provisions.<sup>32</sup> This actually compels the workers to find out sources for extra income by taking stitching work to home and engage family labour. It is also notable that the workers inside the factory do not have enough information on the minimum wages and other statutory provisions they are eligible for. For instance, only 15 percent of the respondents in the NLI study reported awareness on this issue. This is especially true for the workers who stay far away from the city. The workers accept any rate that is given to them by the contractors'.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> As per the provisions in the Factories Act, Where a worker works in a factory for more than nine hours in any day or for more than forty-eight hours in any week, he shall, in respect of overtime work, be entitled to wages at the rate of twice his ordinary rate of wages. For details, see, *Section 59, Chapter VI of the Factory Act of India, 1948, Act No. 63, Govt. of India*

<sup>33</sup> NLI (1998) as quoted in ICN (2000), op cit.



## **II Stitching Centre Workers<sup>34</sup>**

### ***II. A. Rakesh, Dilbag Nagar, Jalandhar***

Rakesh (name is changed), aged 30 has been stitching football for the last 16 years. He has educated up to secondary level and holds a diploma in electrical engineering. However, he could not manage to find out a job and has been continuing with soccer ball stitching, which he started at the age of fourteen. He is working with a stitching centre, managed by a contractor of an exporting firm. He also stitches at home for other contractors as well.

According to him the overall condition of the workers in the entire industry is not good but to sustain life they have to work. He says, “stitching of soccer ball in stitching centre is not at all a rewarding job. Apart from wages, general conditions of work are also pathetic. People use to meet with deep needle pricks and injuries and there is no proper first aid facility at the stitching centre.” Talking about the provisions of the centre, there is no facility including for drinking water or tea in the centres”. He had no idea whether the centre is registered under the Factories Act. The total number of workers in the unit is eighteen and it indicates that the unit is not a registered one as there is no registration required if the number of workers is less than twenty. Benefit like PF, ESI, Bonus, Leave is not provided to them. He says, “there is no guarantee of work tomorrow and everything depends on the mercy of the contractor”

Wages are based on the number of pieces a person stitches in the centre. He manages to stitch four to five soccer balls a day. This may not guarantee him fair wages as the rate of stitching differs based on the quality of the ball. He says, “the worker does not have any control on selecting the balls and it solely depends on the material that the contractor brings. The rate for stitching of a first quality three ply, 32-panel soccer ball in his stitching centre is Rs.37 and it is Rs.28 for 18 panel two ply soccer ball. For cheap quality balls it is Rs.18 per ball”. His daily income therefore significantly varies as per the availability of balls for stitching. Maximum possible income of a day, if he stitches four first quality soccer balls is around Rs.120. “ It never happens as all of us will not get only first quality balls for stitching. On an average I earn around Rs.70 to 85 a day”. However, the situation is slightly better if they stitch Rugby balls. One can stitch around 15 to 18 Rugby balls a day and stitching charge of one Rugby ball is Rs.21 to 23, which ensures workers a better pay.

“There are no significant changes in the stitching rates”, he recollects. “Every year there is negotiation for rate increase in the factory. However, it is exclusively done between the management and the contractors. Even if most of the workers belong to a trade union, it is incapable for ensuring us better rates. We have no representation in price fixing. Last year there was a revision of rate

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<sup>34</sup> Stitching centre workers are people who are stitching inside a small unit, which is registered or unregistered. It accommodates around 12 to 18 workers in a unit. These units are managed by the contractors of respective factories. However, the factories, apparently do not engage directly with the stitching centres.

and a subsequent increase of 50 *paise* for mini soccer ball, Rs.1.50 for all other soccer balls and Rs.1 for Rugby ball”. He says, “The Company I work for, gives comparatively better wages than other factories. There are some factories, where there has no rate revision for many years”. However he feels that the income from stitching centre work is not enough to meet the needs of the family. On an average he earns Rs.2400 per month. “How can I manage my six member family with this money and therefore, I take work from other contractors and get it done with the help of my wife mother and sometimes father”.

Rakesh is reported to be suffering from physical morbidities such as backache, stiffness and gastric problems. “ I will leave this job, if I get a better one. I have no savings, but large debt and there is always uncertainty of work. I really do not want to turn my home to a workplace and I cannot imagine my children engaging in soccer ball stitching. But I have to wait and see where the fate takes me to”.

## **II.B. Pawan *Dilbag Nagar, Jalandhar***

Pawan (name changed), aged 36, has been in this industry for the 15 years. He is working in a stitching centre at Dilbag Nagar, managed by a contractor of a company, which manufactures and exports sports goods in Jalandhar. He stitches inflatable balls (Soccer balls, Rugby balls) in the stitching centre. His family has been in soccer ball stitching for ages. He started stitching at the age of 12. Dropping his school education at the age of 15 he has become a soccer ball stitche. He says, “there was no alternative in front of me. My father was a soccer ball stitche in a factory. He lost the job and started working under contractors. I used to help him in stitching, as it was so important for the survival of our family. I wanted to continue my studies, however, my family could not have been survived without me working”.

He recollects that the hardships that the workers in the industry face are still continuing. “The profit margin is too high for the soccer ball but still we are paid less for our hard work”, When work is more the rate is less at that time which is absolutely absurd”, he says. He observes that the main reason for the prevalence of lesser wages is the increase in labour force. Previously only people from the local area were in the job but currently migrants from other states (U.P, Bihar) have also started doing it and are ready to work for lesser wages.

There has no revision of stitching rate in the factory for the last five years, he recollects. However, interview with a contractor in the factory revealed that there is annual revision of rates, subsequent to a negotiation with the Company in the month of March. Though there is a revision as per Pawan it is not reaching to the worker. He recollects that “I got Rs.27 for stitching first quality football in 2002 and I am getting the same this year also. The rate of rs.17 for the cheap quality ball is also remaining same. Where is the revision?” Pawan, stitching four soccer balls a day, manages to earn Rs.70-90 a day depending on the

quality of balls available for stitching. He manages to earn up to Rs.125 a day, if he stitches Rugby balls.

Like other stitching centre worker, he also takes stitching work from other contractors and gets it done by family members. His wife, mother and grandmother do stitching work at home. He says, income from stitching centre alone cannot help run the family. So we all have to work”.

### ***II. C. Ved Kumar, Jalandhar***

Ved Kumar (name changed) aged 50, is a football stitcher from Jalandhar. He has been associated with this profession for the last 36 years. As he says, “the condition of the workers in this industry has deteriorated as years passed away”.He said that “Jitni Mehnat hai utni paise nahi milte” (we are underpaid). He has worked in a stitching centre for some period of time and now is working from home (home based worker).

He recollects ”earlier when football were made of leather and panel cutting was done by hand, the owners hired workers even by paying advance of Rs. 25,000. However today as workers are more and work is less they pay as per their will”. Home-based producers are also suffering from the present crisis. He says ”prices of the football depend on the quality of the ball. Price of the same ball in stitching centre is more than in the household units. A worker can stitch only a maximum of 4-5 balls in a day. It means, for 10-12 hours of work I can earn only 75-100 day. The situation is worst in stitching centers.

The workers in stitching centers work in filthy environment without proper drinking water and medical care facilities. When asked about increasing wages, contractor said that if you have to do, then do otherwise there are many others to do” as Ved Raj says. “On few occasion I asked for an advance but the contractor denied it. I stopped doing work for him but to sustain life I have to work for him again. We are not in a position to fight but accept what we get. There is huge margin in this product but the workers despite of their hard labour is getting nothing. It is very difficult to survive in these conditions”. In stitching centers workers are under the contractor and have no relation with the owner. So it becomes tough for the workers to negotiate for any responsibility that the owner is supposed to do.

The case studies given above shed light on many pertinent issues associated with work conditions, wages, living conditions and health issues among stitching centre workers. All of them revealed that there is no security of employment and living income in the soccer ball industry. Though, stitching centres are small units, the workers are not getting any statutory benefits as per the Factories Act, Maternity Benefit Act, Minimum Wages Act and Contract Labour Regulation Act as most of the stitching centres are

unregistered. Minimum wages as per the Punjab State as revised in the year 2006 for all semi-skilled and unskilled workers is Rs.2250. However, in the above three cases nobody is found earning up to this level.

Though it is unregistered, provisions of the Contract Labour Regulation and Abolition Act are applicable for the workers in the stitching centres. However, stitching centre workers under the contractors of the Companies are not provided with any provision such as canteen facilities, crèches, transportation, paid leave, insurance, advance payment and compensation for industrial accidents in the company, violating the provisions of the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act<sup>35</sup>. As per the provisions in the contract labour (regulation and abolition act) every contractor should keep a register of workers and issue employment cards for the contract workers However, in the stitching centres the contractors do not keep registers.<sup>36</sup>

Another pertinent issue related with wages for stitching centre workers is the differences in the stitching charges. Though workers are stitching similar quality balls, it is reported that rate of stitching varies notably from company to company, even if they are supplying for the same buyers. The reasons of the same are many. Firstly, in some companies, for instance, in Rattan Brothers and Soccer International, there are no big or small intermediary contractors. Workers get work directly from the companies. Therefore they get higher rates. Secondly, it is commonly reported from the workers that contractors lower the rate of stitching since higher rate of stitching will not make any

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<sup>35</sup> In every establishment to which the Act applies and wherein work regarding the employment of contract labour is likely to continue for six months and wherein contract labour numbering one hundred or more are ordinarily employed and adequate canteen shall be provided by the contractor for the use of such contract labour within sixty days of the date of coming into force of the rules in the case of the existing establishments and within 60 days of the commencement of the employment of contract labour in the case of new establishments. Similarly in every place wherein contract labour is required to halt at night in connection with the working of the establishment to which the Act applies and in which employment of contract labour is likely to continue for 3 months or more the contractor shall provide and maintain rest rooms or other suitable alternative accommodation within fifteen days of the coming into force of the rules in the case of existing establishments, and within fifteen days of the commencement of the employment of contract labour in new establishment. For details see, *Chapter VII, The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970*, Govt. of India.

<sup>36</sup> Every Contractor shall in respect of each work on which he engages contractor labour shall maintain a Muster Roll and a Register of Wages in Form XVI and Form XVII respectively and issue an employment card in Form XIV to each worker within three days of the employment of the workers. For details see, *The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970*, Govt. of India.

difference in the commissions that the contractors get from the Company. It could be true because, rate fixation in most of the cases, is done between the management and the contractors and there is no written agreement between contractors and workers. Thirdly, in certain cases, there is multiple levels of sub-contracting and hence share of the commission of different contractors involved is eventually reduced from the stitching charges. Fourthly and finally, managements themselves, in some cases do not revise the rate, putting blame on the appreciation of Indian rupees against US Dollars as well as creating a sense of fear of loss of job for the workers by spreading the news of erosion of orders to other production centres in China and Pakistan.

It is also notable that most of the stitching centre workers are home workers as well. Everybody reported that the income from stitching centre is not adequate to have decent living. In many situations, even income from all sources does not ensure the workers a decent living. Though, there is not enough for a generalisation, it is reported that most of the stitching centre workers are under debt trap due to the general increase of living expenditure. It also explains the presence of child labour/help in soccer ball stitching, which is a concealed reality.

Conditions of work of the workers in the stitching centres also point to many aspects of work related and work induced health problems. It is reflected from the case studies that workers are suffering from physical morbidities such as needle pricks, backache due to the continuous sedentary work, muscular pain, breathing trouble and gastro problems. Some of them reported with chronic health problems such as Asthma due to the exposure to dust in the materials and vision impairment. Behavioural risk factors such as heavy drinking and smoking, which have close association with their nature of work, are other significant health problems. Most of the workers either do not identify or ignore their health problems due to various reasons. It is reported by one worker that they do not take such things seriously that it involves much of our opportunity cost. Burden of health care expenditure is another reason they pointed out.

### **III Home Based Workers<sup>37</sup>**

#### ***II. C. Kishan, New Rasila Nagar, Basti Danishmandan, Jalandhar***

Kishan(name changed), aged 50 has been working in the soccer ball industry for the last 40 years. Started as a stitcher at the age of 10, he worked as panel cutter in a factory and now working from home for contractors who are supplying to Soccer International, Sports Syndicate and Spartan sports.

He recollects the changes that the industry has witnessed over the past 40 years. “Everything was done manually in the earlier period. Now stitching has become simpler. Earlier, before 25 years, workers were less and therefore employers would be ready to give even an advance of Rs 20,000/- to retain the workers. Now workers are more in number. Contractors who were workers earlier have become very rich”.

Till 1992, Kishan had been working as a panel cutter in Savy International He lost his forefinger in the cutting machine and he could not continue as cutter. Thereafter, he started working from home and now with a stitching centre managed by a contractor supplying to an exporting company.

Like others, he cannot stitch four to five soccer balls a day as he lost his forefinger. He stitches three soccer balls a day, if it is 32 panels and two, if it is 18 panels. On an average he earns 50 to 60 rupees a day from the stitching centres. He also takes work from other contractors who are supplying to two exporting companies. He says “there is wide discrepancies in the stitching rate from companies to companies. For instance, in one company, rate for 18 and 32 panels, three-ply soccer ball is Rs.27, while it is Rs.37 in the other. Workers are unaware of the exact rate of all factories, commissions taken by the contractors and actual price of a made up soccer ball. We want the rate of balls of all quality should be displaced in front of the factory so that the contractors can no longer exploit us”. He also notes, “establishment of stitching centres is a complete arrangement of the respective Companies to escape from labour laws. The contractors are not the real owners of the stitching centres. The management wants to keep the stitching centres just to show their buyers in the foreign companies that there is good conditions of work, fair wages and work is not done with the participation of children. When the management proudly takes the buyers to the stitching centres they do not even recognise home workers, where everybody including children of 10 years of old to older adults of 70 years are engaged in stitching for a living. In real terms, maximum work of soccer ball stitching is happening in home based settings”.

Everybody in his family, including wife, aged mother, son and daughter are engaged in soccer ball stitching. His elder son stopped education after 10<sup>th</sup> class

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<sup>37</sup> Home-based workers are of different category. There are workers who take work from the contractor s. There are also workers who take work from other households. Also there are home-based workers who take work to home directly from the Company.

to assist the family. Still he cannot manage the family expenditure. His family earns around Rs.4000 per month on an average from all sources. His expenditure however far exceeds the income. He says, “we have no saving so they have nothing left during emergencies. The contractors do not give any advance. I took money from lender at an interest of 10 percent. I have done it many times. I have lost the gold of my wife and some household article, which I gave as security to moneylender and I could not repay. Once I even rented my cooking gas cylinder to arrange some money for a health emergency of my wife. The situation is similar for all. One of my friends also sold his blood to get some extra money to meet an emergency. Most of the workers sold their houses due to indebtedness and are now staying in rented houses”.

Declining family income in has also plunged more members of the families of stitchers into work. Though most of the Companies deny participation of children below fourteen years in soccer ball stitching, child work/help is found to be an integral part of soccer ball stitching. As Kishan says, “you do not need any proof from labour inspector, testimony from any company or brand or any inspection report of SGFI volunteers to prove child labour in Basti Danishmandan. Just look at the fingers of our children. You will see the dark dead cells on their thumbs and needle pricks on their forefingers. These are not the marks of their playfulness, but marks of their hardships. You look around our Basti, you will not see any children playing and in fact they have no playgrounds left. All places are occupied by Companies and we feel like living inside a factory”.

Decline conditions of health are another major unnoticed issue as reported by Kishan. He says, “most of the workers, especially women and older adults will never take their health problems seriously due to work pressures. Most of the families cannot afford to buy good food”. Speaking on his health problems, Kishan says, “There is no hour or day free of work for me. I have to work even in my disability”.

### ***III.B. Family of Sarala Devi, Shivaji Nagar, Jalandhar***

Sarala Devi (name changed) and her husband live with their seven-member family in a small house in Tilak Shivaji Nagar. Sarala, has come from Batala to Shivaji Nagar, Jalandhar 28 years back soon after her marriage. She had never worked before marriage and now has been working since sixteen years. She stitches two footballs a day but does not do the complete work. She just stitches and the finishing is done by her husband. Her husband gets work directly from Rattan Brothers. On an average, her husband daily collects 15 rugby balls and 7 soccer balls. She stitches three rugby balls and two soccer ball a day. The work is jointly done in their family with the help of all members.

The price rate of stitching of soccer balls varies with regard to its quality, size, material and design. In Rattan Brothers, where they get work from the stitching charges for a first quality soccer ball, which is 18 and 32 panels, 3 ply is Rs.30.

For cheap quality, which is 18 panels, 2 ply they get Rs.18 to 19 per ball. Sarala's husband recalls, "there has not been any increase in the rate since last five years. We have to agree to whatever the contractor pays to us as we don't have any other choice". They manage to earn around Rs.4000 a month from stitching of both soccer and Rugby balls.

All members of her family, including husband father, son and grandmother are engaged in soccer ball stitching. Sarala, says, "we do not get time to prepare all the time because of the workload. We just take food only two times a day. I frequently take tea that my mother-in-law makes for me. My husband works for more than 16 hours a day, starting from six o'clock early in the morning to twelve o'clock in the night. We have to work like that to sustain the family and meet the expenses of the education of our children". They note, "there have been no efforts from Government authorities, trade unions, management and contractors for better wages for workers in engaged in Soccer ball stitching. We think that the rate should be at least Rs.40 for the first quality produced".

### ***III.C. Ravi Raj, Basti, Danishmandan, Jalandhar***

Ravi Raj (name changed), aged 45, is a football stitcher from Jalandhar. He has a total working experience of 20 years in this profession. He is a home based worker and currently working for an exporting company. He directly gets the work from the unit. He recollects "earlier when football were made of leather and panel cutting was done by hand but nowadays, the balls are made up of either PU/PVC and rubber and the panel cutting is done by machine.

He notes, "prices of the football depend on the quality of the ball. Price of the same ball in stitching centre is more than in the household units. A person getting the work directly from the factory and the worker getting work through the contractor has different rates. The contractor gives different rates to the workers working in the rural and urban areas. The rates are high in the urban areas whereas in the villages the rates are low for same ball. He gets a maximum of 10 balls per day. He himself can stitch 4-5 balls /day. The stitching rate for the first quality 32-panel ball is Rs.30 whereas that of the medium quality, it ranges between 20 and 25 and the rates of the cheap ball is Rs.17. Workers who are directly getting the work from the unit gets the balls whose stitching ranges between Rs.25 and 27 whereas the cheap quality ball is given to the contractors".

However, there is some expenditure incurring from the workers side as well. According to him he has to spend Rs.2.50 per ball in stitching so that the actual earning per ball is less than what he gets from the contractor. Total earning of the family from this occupation is Rs. 5000-6000 per month.

He complained for loss of eyesight and now he is using spectacle for clear vision. Other problems related to health were headache, acidity, pain in the



joints and backache. He notes, “problems such as piercing of the needles had become a part of daily routine. He also said that there is loss of efficiency earlier he used to stitch 6 balls per day but at present he can stitch only 4 to 5 balls per day”.

#### ***III.D. Madan, Basti Danishmandan, Jalandhar***

Madan (name changed), aged 55, is into soccer ball stitching for more than 40 years. He is a home based worker and currently working for a soccer ball exporting company. He directly gets the work from the unit. Five members of his family including wife, two daughters and son are engaged in soccer ball stitching. Total earning of the family from this occupation is around Rs.5000 to 6000 a month.

There is not guarantee of work for people through out the year. He notes, “generally the work is less in the month of June and July. When work is less the share of work given to each worker is also less. There are also instances of reduction of stitching rates. For instance, in the previous year (2006-07) the rates were decreased by Rs.3, which resulted in a strike. However, it has not made any impact”.

Workers in the home-based settings are not provided with any social security benefit. He says, “there are about more than 250 workers in the factory but only few have their names in the attendance register. The owners take the benefit of the fact that the workers are not unionised, they agree to work at less rate because they cannot stop working as this is the only source of income for running the family”.

#### **III. E. Darshan and Family**

Darshan (name changed) is staying with his eight member joint family in Basti Danishmandan. He has been stitching footballs for the last 15 years i.e. he started working at the age of 13 years. He is taking work from a contractor supplying to two manufacturing and exporting companies in Jalandhar. With eight people working, four men and four women, the entire family stitches about 30 soccer balls a day.

Rate of stitching they get for the first quality ball (18 panels, 2 ply) is Rs.25 and it is Rs.24 for a match quality ball and Rs.14 for cheap quality balls. Darshan notes, “labour is same for any quality of the ball. However, there is no surety of the quality of balls we get for stitching. Therefore, the income varies considerably. There is some amount of input cost for the workers for stitching. The worker has to beat the cost of threads, which is around Rs.50 to 60 for one roll. One roll can be used for stitching of 30 18-panel soccer balls. So on an average it is estimated that thread worth Rs.2 is needed for stitching a ball. It implies, the worker earns Rs.2 less than what he gets from the contractor”.

He notes, “the rate of stitching has not been revised for the last five years and sometimes, the contractor himself reduces the rate. Even if the contractor reduces the rate we have to take it because there is no other alternate source of employment and income”. His earnings vary from 1600-2500 per month depending on the orders. During the peak season it is 2500 whereas when there is not enough work he earns about 1600-1700. He notes that the home based workers gets less than Rs.2 that of the workers in the stitching centre for the same work. He gets payment at an interval of 15 days in cash. Sometimes the contractor gives advance if he needs. His total monthly earning is Rs.2500 whereas the earning for the entire family is approximately Rs.12000.

His working hours ranges between 9 in the morning to 10-11 in the night. Due to such long working hours he has some health problems like headache due to continuous concentration for long hours, needles prick has become a regular phenomenon, cuts and backache.

### **III. F. Family of Kishan Lal, Shivaji Nagar , Jalandhar**

Kishan Lal (name changed), aged 56, is a home-based worker. He takes work directly from the company. He started work at a very early age of nine. He has been working since the past 45 years. He is an active member of Lal Jhanda Sports Workers Union affiliated to CITU. He takes 10 to12 footballs and 15-16 rugby balls. He, along with his two sons, does the stitching works. He also worked as a contractor in 1976.

His monthly income from stitching varies from Rs.3000 to 4000, depending upon the order and quality of balls. He notes, “we have been trying our level best under the banner of our union to bargain for better rates. Though it produced results in some instances, most of the time our negotiations with the management did not translate better rates”.

This is perhaps the only factory in Jalandhar where rate of stitching is negotiated directly between the factory and the representatives of workers, he noted. As he observes, the workers’ representatives send an initial notice of demand for rate revision to the management by the month of January every year. They again send a reminder after seven days and normally the company calls for a meeting after that. If it is not happened, the union will approach the management and settle.

Following observations could be made from the field, based on the case studies given above.

- There is precariousness in the nature of employment in terms of availability of work and wages.
- The employers are less interested in the welfare scheme for the workers.
- Government policies are not favourable for the workers.

- There is presence of child labour in the home based and workshop based production settings.
- There is considerable discrepancy in wages among workers. It depends on the level of sub-contracting, revision by the management and commission that the contractor takes. There are also differences in stitching rates for same quality balls produced in different companies for the same brands. Competition between contractors is another reason as some contractors take orders at lower rates so that they get more orders from the company.
- Condition of the workers can only improve after the abolition of contract system.
- Any benefit covered CSR initiatives and labour laws are not found applicable to the stitching centres and home based production settings which are also part of the supplier chain
- The existing CSR practices in most of the time are not implemented properly even in big firms and workers
- Nature of employment is highly informalised and collective bargaining is completely absent.

#### **IV Contractors<sup>38</sup>**

##### **IV.A. Kumar, Ambedkar Nagar, Basti Guzan, Jalandhar**

Kumar (name changed) was a panel cutter in *Myre International*. He left the Company in 1992, after he cut his thumb. He has started working as a contractor in 1995. The companies he engages with are *Hansraj Mahajan and Sons, Sports Syndicate and Rattan Brothers*.

He has around 30 workers, all home-based, with him. He collects 100 soccer balls a day from all these factories.

“Rates of stitching are slightly different in all these factories”, he observes. “While one factory gives Rs.16 for cheap quality balls, another gives Rs.15 and the third one gives Rs.14. For first quality balls, it is Rs.32, 39 and 28 in these factories. Rate fixation is just a management decision and there is no standardisation of stitching rates. Company fixes rates at its own will. Though there are discussions every year for rate revision, it will not make many differences. The rate of stitching will not make any difference in out commission as it is same in every factory. We get a commission of Rs. 2.50 per ball from all the factories”.

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<sup>38</sup> Contractors are the intermediaries between workers and the company. There are big and small contractors. Big contractors have their own raw material processing units and stitching centres. They have their own stitching centres and outsourcing provisions. These contractors also have the panel cutting machines so they directly take the sheet and do the panel cutting themselves. Then they send the lot back to the unit for printing and again get it back for stitching. Small contractor get stitching work done by home based workers.

As per Kumar, the reasons that the managements tell are a) there is absence of constant orders from the buyers, b) if the production cost is high there are chances of losing work and finally c) depreciation of US Dollar, which is a recent phenomena.

“Though we are better off than workers, it is not true that all the contractor are doing well”, he says. “There are occasions when I did not get work at all. For instance, I have not got work for the last one and half months. The management prefers stitching centre work to households. There is also a trend of moving work to stitching centres based in rural areas where cost of stitching is considerably low”.

Kumar notes, “I earn around Rs.6000 to 7000 a month. In peak season, I earn up to Rs.12000 a month. The management pays twice in a month through cheque after cutting the tax”.

At present there are 17-18 workers under him, including 5 men who stitch the first quality and 13 women who stitch the cheap quality balls. He says, “most of the cheap quality balls are stitched by children. Children from 10-13 do the work. Things will not work out if children do not work”.

Contractors had an association earlier and it was instrumental in negotiation with the companies. However, it was dissolved two years back due to the internal problems after the death of its President, *Mr. Ramlal*. According to Kumar, the contractors can never unite because all are competing for work. The ultimate advantage of it is for the companies.

#### ***IV.B. Prakash, Basti Danishmandan, Jalandhar***

Prakash has been in soccer ball industry for 15 years. Started as a stitcher, he is now a contractor for a soccer ball exporting company in Jalandhar.

He gets 100 balls per day from the factory, which he gives to 20-25 home-based workers. On an average every worker gets 4-5 balls per day. Of these 25 workers 20 workers are female and the remaining workers are male. “We prefer work to be done in households because of worker in a stitching center can do only 4-5 balls a day whereas at home they can complete 8-10 balls, he says. As per him rates of stitching for different qualities of soccer balls as follows

Stitching rate for first quality ball – 35-36

Rubber 5 number (32 pannel) –32-33

Match quality – 27-28

Cheap quality –17-18

Mini ball (1-3 ply) – 12-15

There is a difference of Rs.2 to 3 per ball depending on the number of ply. There are also difference of rate in every company irrespective of the commonalities such as brands, quality etc., the rate fixation is at the sole discretion of the manufacturers.

“Rate fixation is a process of negotiation which done on an annual basis. There is no formal organization of the contractors. Earlier the negotiations were with the members of the exporters association whereas at present it is factory based. One or two people from the contractors who are elected by them take part in the negotiation process. The management starts from lower rate (25p) where as the contractors starts from a rupee and finally the rate which increases remains in between this. Once the rates are fixed it is valid for a year and no price negotiation will take place in between”.

He earns an average of Rs.6000 to 8000 a month. He gets payment by cheque twice a month whereas he does the payment in cash to the workers every fortnight. He as a contractor is named in the list of SGFI. Members of SGFI conduct regular checks every 10-15 days. They provide medical kit, which includes bandages and creams.

#### **IV.C. Shivaji Singh**

Name: Shivaji Sing (name changed) has been working as a contractor for one of the exporting firms that supply to the brand *Gilbert*. He is running a stitching centre. The cost of rent, electricity etc are met by the company and he is only managing the labour part. However, the centre is in his name. There are about 18 workers in his stitching centre, 16 of them are men while the remaining two are female. He gets 50 soccer balls and 50 rugby balls per day.

The rates are fixed between contractors and the management. The contractor's commission ranges between 2-2.5 per ball depending on the quality of the ball. Stitching rate for different quality of soccer balls are as follows.

First quality ball – 36-39

Cheap quality –30

As per him, the company revises the rate of stitching every year in the presence of contractors. It is a written agreement. Earlier trade unions used to be part of the process, but now it is done between contractors and the management. He agreed that the workers have no role in the fixation of rate for stitching. When the rates are revised there is no difference in the commission for the contractors whereas the rates for the workers matter, however workers prefer stitching high rate ball.

#### **V Trade Unions**

***Ram Murti Singh, Gen. Secretary, Lal Jhanda Sports Labour Union, affiliated to CITU***

He has been with the workers of soccer ball industry for the twenty-four years and he notes a few changes. For example, the management developed a system to bypass labour benefits. There are big, small and semi contractors, a system prevailing over a long period of time. Unionisation is weak in Soccer ball sector. Some of the union activities comprise of:

- Demanding revision of stitching rates for workers
- Wage negotiation between employers and union
- Wage negotiation between worker and management (without union)
- Settlement of disputes between management and workers with or without the involvement of labour court

He narrates his experience of organising workers in sports goods industry. Wage rate in years 1987-88 was Rs 7-8. Convinced of the lower rate, he struck work in all factories. The management association called for a discussion which was followed by a wage increment to Rs 13 for football. They then established a system of yearly wage revision with door to door campaign, held meetings, demonstrated in front of companies where rates were much lower. The union has members from every company with a total membership of 3000. with the change of management association, the rate fixing is now settled at the company. There is also a trend of shifting of work villages. For instance, where people are unaware of the prevailing rates, there is more engagement of women as workers.

“Contractors are not contractors”. The Contract Regulation law is not applicable. CSR and SGFI are just for name sake. Nothing is done for the welfare of the workers. The schools run by them are not attended by children. Only one school runs well”.

According to him there are many difficulties in organizing the workers. These include, presence of child labour, migrant labour, workers do not want to risk their work and workers are aware about their rights, but afraid of asserting the same.

## **Conclusion and Recommendation**

The study based on primary survey in and around Jalandhar, Punjab looked into the structure of production organisation, labour relations, prices and wages, social and economic profile of workers, working conditions, unionisation and extent of collective bargaining. It also attempted to capture the processes of price negotiation, applicability of labour laws and other existing measures of corporate social responsibility in the soccer ball production industry.

Soccer ball production in Jalandhar is a highly labour intensive one. Production of Soccer Balls in Jalandhar has witnessed many changes over a period of time. Earlier, the material mainly used was leather and the production was entirely done by hands. Factory and stitching centre-based production in which workers had direct contract with the employer continued till 1977. The nature of production has changed after 1977 and factories started outsourcing production to home based settings, however engaging the workers directly. The shift in 1977 brought family labour including children to older adults into football stitching. Though soccer ball stitching had been completely shifted to stitching centres and home based settings by 1977, workers had direct relationship with the factories in terms of taking orders and payments without any intermediary.

Another noticeable shift was the emergence of contractors. There were many notable changes happened with regard to soccer ball production after the emergence of intermediary contractors. Most important one is on the role of trade unions. Till 1986 trade unions had been playing a significant role in rate negotiation between workers and the factories. The contractor system in soccer ball production undermined and bypassed trade unions. Subsequently workers and their representatives lost their control on fixing rates for soccer ball stitching. In the new system, most of the manufacturers engaged in direct contract with the contractors and workers eventually came under the contractors without any direct relationship with the principal employer.

Emergence of contractor system had had an impact on the labour relations at large. Firstly it entirely informalised the work through decentralising production processes by

the systematic division of labour. Process of production also witnessed divergences significantly from factory to factory. Survey of five companies revealed that there are noticeable differences in work organisation, production processes and pricing for stitching for similar qualities of balls produced for the same brands. This will be discussed in detail in the section on pricing and wages. Secondly, it scattered the work force and restricted the normal processes of unionisation and collective bargaining, which is around a factory and directly with factory management. Thirdly, it took away the control of workers in deciding the pricing of their stitching.

Production organization in the soccer ball manufacturing consists of contracting out of work at multiple levels. Though, there is a visible linear chain in the production processes including, buyers/importers, manufacturer/exporter, contractors, stitching centre/home based workers, there are intertwined sub linkages as well. Primary study showed that the production chain has been further sub-contracted or informalised in Jalandhar with the relocation of stitching centres managed by the contractors to outside the city of Jalandhar. Also there are instances of sub-contracting from big contractors to small contractors and home based workers to other households. In short, there is no set pattern of organisation in soccer ball production.

Social profile of the workforce in the soccer ball industry revealed that soccer ball stitching is not now just confined to 'scheduled castes' as it was earlier, however all segments including economically poor section from the upper castes are now engaged in soccer ball stitching. The traditional soccer ball stitching communities largely belong to Scheduled Castes, namely *Ravidas, Chamar, Bhagat biradiri and Valmiki*. The study has identified upper castes, but economically poor, households of *Jats, Mahajans* and even *Brahmins* in soccer ball stitching in Jalandhar. Another group of people who are now engaged in soccer ball stitching is migrant workers from the states like, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. They mostly work in the stitching centres. Workers in soccer ball production in and around Jalandhar are socially and economically poor segments of the society.



With regard to conditions of work and wages for workers in the factories, it is though the company claims that all workers inside the factory are getting benefits of provident fund, employee state insurance and minimum wages, workers in real terms are not getting the same. Similarly, the system of piece rate, which itself is an indication that precarious work is still being followed even inside the factory. There are no regulation or revision of wages for workers inside the factory. It is also notable that the workers inside the factory do not have enough information on the minimum wages and other statutory provisions they are eligible for.

With regard to working conditions and wages of stitching centre workers, it is found that there is no security of employment and living income in the soccer ball industry. Though, stitching centres are small units, the workers are not getting any statutory benefits as per the Factories Act, Maternity Benefit Act, Minimum Wages Act and Contract Labour Regulation Act as most of the stitching centres are unregistered. Minimum wages as per the Punjab State as revised in the year 2006 for all semi-skilled and unskilled workers is Rs.2250. However, in the above three cases nobody is found earning up to this level. there is no security of employment and living income in the soccer ball industry. Though, stitching centres are small units, the workers are not getting any statutory benefits as per the Factories Act, Maternity Benefit Act, Minimum Wages Act and Contract Labour Regulation Act as most of the stitching centres are unregistered. Minimum wages as per the Punjab State as revised in the year 2006 for all semi-skilled and unskilled workers is Rs.2250.

With regard to the conditions of work of home based workers, it is found that there is precariousness in the nature of employment in terms of availability of work and wages and considerable discrepancy prevails in wages among workers. It depends on the level of sub-contracting, revision by the management and commission that the contractor takes. There are also differences in stitching rates for same quality balls produced in different companies for the same brands. Competition between contractors is another reason as some contractors take orders at lower rates so that they get more orders from the company. The declining family income in general is found to be plunging more members of the families, including children to older adults into work. In many situations,

even income from all sources does not ensure the workers a decent living. Though, there is not enough for a generalisation, it is reported that most of the stitching centre workers are under debt trap due to the general increase of living expenditure. It also explains the presence of child labour/help in soccer ball stitching, which is a concealed reality. Though most of the Companies deny participation of children below fourteen years in soccer ball stitching, child work/help is found to be an integral part of soccer ball stitching.

Conditions of work of the workers in the home based settings also point to many aspects of work related and work induced health problems. It is reflected from the case studies that workers are suffering from physical morbidities such as needle pricks, backache due to the continuous sedentary work, muscular pain, breathing trouble and gastro problems. Some of them reported with chronic health problems such as Asthma due to the exposure to dust in the materials and vision impairment. Behavioural risk factors such as heavy drinking and smoking, which have close association with their nature of work, are other significant health problems. Most of the workers either do not identify or ignore their health problems due to various reasons. It is reported by one worker that they do not take such things seriously that it involves much of our opportunity cost. Burden of health care expenditure is another reason they pointed out.

Monitoring and regulatory mechanisms both by the state, largely covered through the applicability of respective labour laws, and SGFI is not making significant impact on increasing the wages and general conditions of work of workers. The nature of production organisation is highly informal as well as loosely decentralised. Therefore, most of the labour laws are not applicable to the sector. SGFI regulatory measures have not yet addressed the issue of living wages and better conditions of work.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the findings of the primary study we have following recommendations

1. In the existing system, workers- factory based, stitching centre based and home based- are not in a position to bargain better wages. So there should be result oriented process of formation of workers organization across sectors and factories.

2. Government must take initiatives to check whether the stitching centres are registered under Factories Act and workers are getting benefits as per the provisions of related labour laws
3. Process of rate fixation for stitching of balls and negotiations must be transparent and the government must assign concerned officers (labour officer) to be physically present in the process. Government must also monitor its implementation
4. SGFI, being a body of industry must expand its interventions towards ensuring living wages for workers. Brands must have an independent mechanism to monitor its implementation
5. Manufacturers should take steps to ensure that the rates and conditions offered to workers, through contractors, are fair and uniform. Rates for balls should be posted outside factories. Manufacturers should offer the option for workers to pick up soccer ball kits directly from their premises, rather than from contractors.
6. Brands must address violations of associational rights, especially the crushing of trade unions.
7. Brands and suppliers must ensure prices keep pace with currency fluctuations and inflation, and ensure that losses are not passed on to workers through cuts in the piece-rate.
8. Interventions must be attentive to the vulnerability of women workers.
9. Brands must promote equality of treatment for all workers engaged in substantially similar work whether employed in factories, stitching centers or home-based facilities, including in wages and benefits.

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