

## The social and solidarity economy: creating opportunities and fostering solidarity amongst home-based workers in Brazil

Home-based workers produce goods or services in or near their homes. They sell these goods locally and in global markets. They are often invisible and undervalued. In most countries, they are excluded from labour legislation, social protection and have low and insecure incomes. To overcome these hardships, home-based worker organisations around the globe have put into practice different social and solidarity economy (SSE) organising models. These SSE models value principles like democratic ownership and control of the organisation to make it

accountable to its members, self-help, self-reliance, and the building of solidarity amongst the members of the organisation. By following these principles, many SSE organisations have built better access to markets and members' income has improved.

Home-based worker organisations such as ATEMDO in Brazil have observed that by adopting a social and solidarity economy organisational model they have found a way to support their members on many fronts.

### Associação de Trabalhadores em Domicílio (ATEMDO) - São Paulo, Brazil

Years ago, in Brazil the SSE movement was on the rise and home-based workers received support from the government and other organisations during times of economic hardship and unemployment. But for different social and political reasons, that momentum stopped, and morale declined. Home-based workers who were beginning to organise were discouraged by this impasse, as their efforts to organise and be recognised as workers weakened.

Nonetheless, a persistent group kept their commitment intact and continued working to defend their labour rights. On September 4th, 2019, 25 home-based workers got together at the Public Centre for Solidarity Economy and founded the Associação de Trabalhadores em Domicílio (ATEMDO). As of March 2022, the association has fifty-three members, 90 % of whom are women who come from diverse areas of work such as: craft-making, garment-making, food production, urban agriculture, and the recycling of products.

#### ATEMDO follows and respects the following principles of SSE

1. Self-management
2. Cooperation
3. Human and Community Development
4. Satisfaction of Human Needs
5. Social Justice
6. Equality of Gender, Race and Ethnicity
7. Equal Access to Information, Knowledge, and Food Security
8. Preservation of Natural Resources through Sustainable Management
9. Responsibilities towards Present and Future Generations

ATEMDO is a membership-based organisation that focuses on collaborative work and follows SSE principles. Its mission is to:

- fight for quality of life,
- guarantee social equality through non-partisan political dialogue
- highlight the right to social justice and quality public policies and
- expand worker's knowledge of their rights through representation, training, workshops, mapping and partnerships.

The organisation assists its members by sharing information, exposing its members to new market opportunities, providing capacity-building training, developing fundraising activities, and by raising awareness of their challenges and demands amongst key stakeholders such as policymakers, potential employers, and the public.

### **Structure and Workplace Democracy**

ATEMDO seeks to bring together individuals or already formed networks of home-based workers. The main criteria for being a part of the organisation is that each member or group makes their own products or provides their own services. Their members are asked to collaborate financially with the organisation, but no specific amount is specified.

From day one, ATEMDO established a democratic structure. All its directive board: a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and board members are elected democratically. After the election of

the first board, members raised funds through contributions to cover its registration process. Members and directors meet every two months in ordinary assemblies. If there is an urgent issue, an extraordinary assembly is convened. In this way, all decisions go through the assembly, where they are discussed among members, and proposals are submitted to voting.

The rest of the ATEMDO team is made up of volunteers committed to the cause, such as their web designer, accountant, and graphic designer.

### **Accessing Markets Collaboratively**

In 2021, ATEMDO implemented an agreement with a local shopping centre to take advantage of an idle space and held a fair for ten days to exhibit their members' products. After conversations with the shopping centre's administration, a period of thirty additional days was granted to continue the exhibition. Thereafter, the mall's administration contacted the association to offer them a space to place a store where they could provide visibility to their members' products and grow their membership.

According to Edileuza Guimarães, president of ATEMDO, the results have been promising, and now they are working towards developing a similar opportunity with another shopping centre. Their aim is to continue with development opportunities, such

as this collaborative space that they have been able to secure for the short term.

Guimarães added that "when we talk about the solidarity economy we talk about the economy of the excluded." She emphasised the effort needed to face those challenges related to prejudices or misconceptions about home-based work. "It is important to educate the customer, we need to share what the solidarity economy is, create awareness, and show them that the true value of our products lies behind the story of the person who has created them and for whom this is his or her only source of income. We must also emphasise that our products are not made on a large-scale basis, but rather that they are unique, one of a kind."

ATEMDO strives to win the fight for the rights of home-based workers and to ensure that the SSE is strengthened throughout Brazil. Its members see themselves as being part of an organisation expanding throughout the country. To this end, they hope to continue promoting the economic-operational sustainability of the association through members' contributions, the sale of their products, creating links with other organisations and individuals to increase their membership. According to Guimarães, for the organisation to be sustainable, the secret is that its members support each other through specific actions or by monetary contributions.



**November 2021.** Representatives from ATEMDO share the ILO Home Work Convention 177 with Federal Deputy Samia Bomfim. Brazil has not yet ratified this Convention.



**November 2021.** Conversations between ATEMDO and the Nascente do Calindó Community Association. Dialogue on Home-based Work, Solidarity Economy, and Rotating Funds.



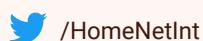
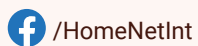
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**Website:**  
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**HomeNet  
INTERNATIONAL**

[www.homenetinternational.org](http://www.homenetinternational.org)



**HOMENET INTERNATIONAL (HNI)** is a global network of membership-based workers' organisations representing thousands of home-based workers (HBWs) around the world. In February 2021, 36 HBW organisations from 20 countries became the first affiliate members to join the organisation, representing more than 600 000 HBWs. The network aims to achieve the following: raise visibility and gain recognition of home-based workers (HBWs) as workers, build and provide solidarity amongst HBWs around common issues and use the power of a global voice to influence governments and employers globally. HomeNet International held its first Congress and was officially launched on February 23 and 24, 2021.

**Resources  
Social and Solidarity Economy  
(SSE)**

HomeNet International- Social and Solidarity Economy  
<https://www.homenetinternational.org/social-solidarity-economy/>

ILO - Social and Solidarity Economy:  
<https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/cooperatives/sse/lang-en/index.htm>