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TITLE

CHALLENGES IN ORGANISING INFORMAL WORKERS: A STUDY OF  
GENDERED HOME-BASED CARE WORK IN POST APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

## ABSTRACT

The paper aims to focus on constraints to and opportunities for organising the gendered home-based care sector in post apartheid South Africa. Also the gender aspect of care work has been closely examined and the study has revealed that societal stereotypes that view care work as women work in the private sphere have to a greater extent contributed to the devaluation of care work in both society and as a form of paid care work.

Qualitative research methodology was used in the form of documentary analysis, interviews and participant observation. The research findings demonstrate that unions themselves, resources and legislation/ policy issues pose as major barriers to organising these atypical workers. Generally, most unions are not yet ready to embrace informal workers into the mainstream as it entails innovation of new organising strategies that could be out of their comfort zone, the pumping out of a vast amount of resources and the avoidance of the huge obligation of breaking through legal barriers. Grassroot mobilising around gender needs has been proposed as the most appropriate strategy for organising the newly emerging mobile and precarious workforce which comprises principally of women. An undeniable link between the formal and informal economy has also been confirmed as formal institutions such as NGOs, hospital, clinics and private companies through the Expanded Public Works Programme here in South Africa make use of informal labour to execute their obligations in the HBC sector. From a gender perspective, this study argues that female jobs are despised by society let alone trade unions where democracy and gender sensitivity should be practiced. Devaluation of female jobs herein care work could be the reason why NEHAWU has taken too long to organise the HBC sector. Finally, results of the study have demystified the societal stereotypes that female jobs are difficult to organise as HBC workers were more than willing to join NEHAWU.