

**The “Invisible” Workers of the Informal Economy – A Case  
study of Home-based Workers in Kwazulu/Natal, South Africa**

**Kalpana Hiralal**

*Department of History (Howard College: MTB) School of Anthropology Gender and Historical  
Studies University of Kwazulu/Natal, Private Bag x54001, Durban, South Africa  
Telephone: 27-31-2607536, Fax: 27-31 2602621, Email: hiralalk@ukzn.ac.za*

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**ABSTRACT** This paper provides a gendered perspective of informal work in Kwazulu/Natal (KZN), South Africa. It examine *women's agency in informal work* with particular reference to home-based work. In South Africa, informal work is an important source of income for many poverty-stricken and unemployed individuals, most notably women. Yet the nature of informal work undertaken varies. This paper profiles the lives of home-based workers and the challenges they confront in the labour market. It argues that home-based work is common and is a survivalist economic activity. Moreover the term “home-based” is problematic, given the fluidity of the concept as there are variation in the nature, form and content of the work undertaken. By examining the lives of home-based workers this paper attempts to illuminate the “hidden” or “invisible” women. This paper seeks to contribute to the limited information on this marginalized group in KZN and their role and contribution within the informal economy.