Gender! A Partnership of Equals

Bureau for Gender Equality
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Approaching Gender Issues

From "WID" to "GAD"

In the early 1970s, researchers began to focus on the division of labour based on sex, and the impact of development and modernization strategies on women. The concept, Women in Development (WID), came into use in this period. It stood for concern with the unequal or disadvantaged position of women, and ending discrimination against them. Research based on this concept recognized that the impact of development and social change on women differed from its impact on men. This view was increasingly supported by development agencies. It became legitimate to focus specifically on women's experiences and perceptions in programmes designed for the promotion of equality between women and men. In those early days, the WID approach was closely linked to strategies which assumed that development would benefit all automatically.

Criticisms of the WID approach emerged later, notably that the benefits of "modernization" did not, in fact, trickle down automatically or equally. Another criticism was that the WID approach focused on integration of women into ongoing development strategies. This often entailed the acceptance of existing social structures which perpetuated inequalities. A third criticism was that the WID approach tended to focus heavily on the productive aspects of women's work, overlooking the burden of social and reproductive functions. Furthermore, women's issues tended to be increasingly relegated to marginal programmes and isolated projects. The WID approach had no direct impact on development per se.

In the 1980s, the Gender and Development (GAD) approach emerged as a result of WID and its shortcomings, concentrating on the unequal relations between men and women due to "uneven playing fields". The term "gender" as an analytical tool arose, therefore, from an increasing awareness of inequalities due to institutional structures. It focuses not on women as an isolated and homogenous group, but on the roles and needs of both men and women - an approach which requires inputs from both sides in order to effect the changes needed to achieve greater equality between them. Given that women are usually in a disadvantaged position in the workplace as compared to men, promotion of gender equality implies an explicit attention to women's needs, interests and perspectives. The objective then is the advancement of the status of women in society, with gender equality as the ultimate goal.

Gender mainstreaming

The concept of bringing gender issues into the mainstream of society was clearly established as a global strategy for promoting gender equality in the Platform for Action adopted at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, in Beijing, in 1995. It highlighted the necessity to ensure that gender equality is a primary goal in all areas of societal development.
The Platform for Action touches on several long-standing concerns of the ILO. Thus, many aspects of the follow-up to the Conference fall naturally into the domain of the Office:

**ILO follow-up on the Fourth World Conference on Women**

Seven of the 12 critical areas of concern identified in the Platform for Action adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women are closely linked to the fields of competence of the ILO, and its mandate. These include:

- Women's increasing burden of poverty
- Inequalities in education and training
- Women's economic participation
- Power-sharing and decision-making
- National and international machinery
- Promotion of human rights for women
- Promotion of the rights of the girl-child

These areas of concern fall under four main categories for the purposes of ILO follow-up and action:

I. Human rights and work

II. Employment generation and poverty eradication

III. Strengthening social protection and social security

IV. Strengthening social dialogue and partnerships

The overall objective of the ILO follow-up plan of action is to ensure the mainstreaming of gender in all ILO programmes and projects, and to promote equality of opportunity and treatment between women and men in the world of work through available ILO means of action. These include standard-setting and monitoring, technical cooperation, research, advisory services, information dissemination, seminars, workshops, publications and other promotional activities.

In July 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defined the concept of gender mainstreaming as follows:

- Mainstreaming a gender perspective is the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels.
- It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated.
- The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.(2)

Mainstreaming includes gender-specific activities and affirmative action, whenever women or men are in a particularly disadvantageous position. Gender-specific interventions can target women exclusively, men and women together, or only men, to enable them to participate in, and
benefit equally from, development efforts. These are necessary temporary measures designed to combat the current direct and indirect consequences of past discrimination.

**Transformation by mainstreaming**

Mainstreaming is not about adding a "woman's component" or even a "gender equality component" into an existing activity. It goes beyond increasing women's participation; it means bringing the experience, knowledge, and interests of women and men to bear on the development agenda. It may entail identifying the need for changes in that agenda. It may require changes in goals, strategies, and action so that both women and men can influence, participate in, and benefit from development processes. The goal of mainstreaming gender equality, is thus the transformation of unequal social and institutional structures into equal and just structures for both men and women.

**Basic principles of mainstreaming**

- Responsibility for implementing the mainstreaming strategy is system-wide, and rests at the highest levels within agencies. Adequate accountability mechanisms for monitoring progress need to be established.
- The initial definitions of issues and problems across all areas of activity should be such that gender differences and disparities can be diagnosed. Assumptions that issues or problems are neutral from a gender-equality perspective should never be made. Gender analysis should always be carried out.
- Clear political will and allocation of adequate resources for mainstreaming, including additional financial and human resources, if necessary, are important for translation of the concept into reality.
- Gender mainstreaming requires that efforts be made to broaden women's equitable participation at all levels of decision-making.
- Mainstreaming does not replace the need for targeted, women-specific policies and programmes, and positive legislation; nor does it do away with the need for gender units or focal points.

*Carolyn Hannan-Andersson, based on the ECOSOC paper.*

**ILO mainstreaming measures**

The ILO has identified gender as an issue cutting across all of its programmes and activities in the world of work. To implement this new strategy:

- The Director-General has issued a policy statement highlighting a strong and visible political commitment at the highest level of the Office.
- The Office has developed an Action Plan on mainstreaming for gender equality in the world of work involving a participatory approach, which covers:
  - A new methodology for analysis to ensure gender concerns are incorporated in planning, programming, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in all of the work of the ILO
  - Gender-sensitive data, and gender-specific development tools and indicators
  - Implementation of gender balance in its personnel policy and practices
**ILO Action Plan on gender mainstreaming 2000-2001:**

- Institutionalizes gender mainstreaming as a strategy of the Office
- Reflects gender as an issue cutting across all four strategic objectives of the ILO:
  - Fundamental principles and rights at work
  - Promoting employment and income
  - Social protection
  - Social dialogue

- Incorporates fundamental changes in approaches and practices with a systematic focus on women and men, through:
  - Gender analysis of social and labour issues by:
    - looking at the complexity of gender differentials in labour market participation,
    - understanding women's and men's constraints and opportunities in relation to knowledge and skills needed, conditions of work, social protection, family responsibilities, and economic and political decision-making, and
    - reviewing the different implications for women and men of the proposed solutions
  - Mechanisms to ensure gender concerns are incorporated into planning, programming, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating ILO's programmes and activities
  - Presents gender mainstreaming as the responsibility of all staff at all levels in all areas, especially at the Director level.

**Key features of the Action Plan**

I. Director-General's policy statement on gender equality and gender mainstreaming
II. Gender mainstreaming in the structure of the International Labour Office
III. Capacity-building for staff and constituents
IV. Gender mainstreaming in the work of the ILO
V. Gender-sensitive human resource and staff policy

Thus, these measures call for gender analysis and planning to be introduced into all ILO activities, and at every level. They help to identify potentially different effects of the work of the ILO on women and men, and the provisions necessary to ensure that its activities have a positive influence on gender equality. To this end, the ILO uses a two-pronged approach: gender mainstreaming and gender-specific interventions, based on the results of gender analysis.

**Mainstreaming competence**

Development of competence in gender mainstreaming is a learning process. An essential part of the process is capacity-building activities specifically tailored to particular areas of desired competence. Guidelines and tools are developed in collaboration with the participants in training sessions, to assist them in a practical manner in their day-to-day work(3) Competence in gender mainstreaming entails:
• A growing awareness that a gender-equality perspective will help address social issues and solve economic problems
• Analysis skills to generate gender-sensitive information and identify crucial gaps
• Advocacy skills for promoting gender equality
• Knowledge of where to find expert support when more in-depth analyses are required

A long journey

The road to gender equality is a long and hard one, and the journey is not yet over. In the United Nations system, it began with the adoption of the third Convention of the ILO - in 1919, the very year of its founding - and continues up to this day, and beyond.

Checklist: UN milestones on the path to gender equality

• ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 1919 (No. 3)
• ILO Underground Work (Women) Convention, 1935 (No. 45)
• Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948 (principles of equality and non-discrimination)
• ILO Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1948 (and Protocol, 1990)
• ILO Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)
• ILO Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1951 (No. 111)
• ILO Maternity Protection Convention (Revised), 1952 (No. 103)
• International Women's Year, 1975
• World Conference on the International Women's Year, Mexico City, 1975 (first global conference on women ever held)
• UN Decade for Women: Equality, development and peace (1976-1985)
• Adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) by the United Nations
• General Assembly, 1979
• World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women, Programme of Action for the second half of the UN Decade for
• Women, Copenhagen, 1980
• ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156)
• World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the UN Decade for Women, Nairobi, 1985. The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women
• UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro, 1992 (role of women in sustainable development recognized)
• International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), Cairo, 1994 (role of women in sustainable development recognized)
• World Summit for Social Development, Copenhagen, 1995 (gender dimensions in alleviation and reduction of poverty, expansion of productive employment, and enhancement of social integration)
• Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for equality, development and peace, Beijing, 1995. The Beijing Platform for Action
• United Nations Economic and Social Council Agreed Conclusions on Gender Mainstreaming, Geneva, 1997
• ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, 1998
• UN Special Sessions on Copenhagen+5 and Beijing+5, 2000
Gender Glossary

On the following pages are explanations of the terminology in common use in discussions of gender equality, to help the reader unfamiliar with gender issues to travel easily through the articles in the remainder of this publication.

1. Gender equality

Gender equality, or equality between women and men, refers to the equal rights, responsibilities, and opportunities of women and men, girls and boys. Gender equality is not just a "women's issue"; it concerns men as well. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same, but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Equality between women and men is both a human rights issue and a precondition for sustainable people-centered development.

2. Sex and gender

Existing differences between men and women are of a biological and social nature:

**Sex** refers to universal biologically determined differences between men and women.

**Gender** refers to the social differences and relations between men and women which are learned, changeable over time, and have wide variations both within and between cultures. These differences and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through the socialization process. They are context-specific and can be modified.

3. Gender roles

Gender roles are learned behaviour in a given society, community or social group in which people are conditioned to perceive activities, tasks and responsibilities as male or female. These perceptions are affected by age, class, race, ethnicity, culture, religion or other ideologies, and by the geographical, economical and political environment. Changes in gender roles often occur in response to changing economic, natural or political circumstances, including development efforts, structural adjustment, or other nationally or internationally based forces. The gender roles of men and women within a given social context may be flexible or rigid, similar or different, and complementary or conflicting.

Both women and men play multiple roles - productive, reproductive and community management - in society. Usually perceived as breadwinners, men are able to devote more time to a single productive role, and play their multiple roles one at a time. In contrast to men, women are often seen as secondary wage-earners. They must play their roles simultaneously and balance competing claims on their limited time. Women's work time and flexibility are therefore much more constrained than has been the case for men. Since men and women have historically played different roles in society, they often face very different cultural, institutional, physical and economic constraints, many of which are rooted in systematic biases and discrimination.

4. Gender analysis
Gender analysis is a tool to diagnose the differences between women and men. It looks at their specific activities, conditions, needs, access to and control over resources, as well as their access to development benefits and decision-making. It studies these linkages and other factors in the larger social, economic, political and environmental context.

Gender analysis entails, first and foremost, collecting sex-disaggregated data (i.e., data broken down by sex) and gender-sensitive information about the concerned population. Gender analysis is the first step in gender-sensitive planning for promoting gender equality.

Gender analysis is not confined to identifying differences. More importantly, it recognizes the politics of gender relations and the adjustments needed to be undertaken by institutions to attain gender equality. It looks at the inequalities between women and men, asks why they exist, and suggests how the gap can be narrowed. Gender analysis is thus also the first step for any policy formulation or programme design, the starting point from which to transform the nature of the development of a society to promote equality between men and women.

5. Gender needs

The roles of men and women in existing societies and institutions are generally different. Thus, their needs vary accordingly. Two types of needs are usually identified:

**Practical needs** arise from the actual conditions which women and men experience because of the gender roles assigned to them in society. They are often related to women as mothers, homemakers and providers of basic needs, and are concerned with inadequacies in living and working conditions, such as food, water, shelter, income, health care and employment. For women and men in the lower socioeconomic strata, these needs are often linked to survival strategies. Addressing them alone only perpetuates the factors which keep women in a disadvantaged position in their societies. It does not promote gender equality.

**Strategic needs** are the needs required to overcome the subordinate position of women to men in society, and relate to the empowerment of women. They vary according to the particular social, economic and political context in which they are formulated. Usually they concern equality issues such as enabling women to have equal access to job opportunities and training, equal pay for work of equal value, rights to land and other capital assets, prevention of sexual harassment at work and domestic violence, and freedom of choice over childbearing. Addressing them entails a slow transformation of the traditional customs and conventions of a society.

6. Gender division of labour

The division of labour between women and men depends on the socioeconomic and cultural context, and can be analyzed by differentiating between productive and reproductive tasks.

**Productive tasks** refer to work undertaken by either men or women to produce goods and services, as well as the processing of primary products.
Reproductive tasks refer to childbearing and the different activities carried out in what is called today the "care economy"; namely, the many hours spent caring for the household members and the community, for fuel and water collection, food preparation, child care, education and health care, and care for the elderly.

Women's involvement in both productive and reproductive tasks means that they invariably work longer hours per day than men do. Women's activities are often unpaid or take place in the informal sector not covered by labour legislation. As a result, women's work is also often excluded from national employment and income statistics.

These tasks need to be revisited from a gender perspective, so that productive and reproductive functions in the home, the community or at the workplace can be shared fairly between women and men insofar as possible. This change towards an equal sharing of tasks requires political commitment, imagination, and perseverance. Then, and only then, will a transformation of existing societal structures come about, resulting in full equality between women and men.

1 See ILO: Gender Issues in the World of Work: Gender Training Package (Geneva, 1995) for a more complete explanation of gender issues.


Decent work: A global issue

Almost everybody works, or wants to. Not everyone who works is employed, of course, and a lot of work goes unrecognized and unrewarded. Some work belongs to the money economy, some meets social goals outside the economic sphere. Much work is drudgery, but much also brings satisfaction. Some work occurs as employment in formal workplaces, in large enterprises. Some occurs informally on the street or in the fields, some in the home. Much work is necessary, the source of sustenance and income, but much is also voluntary.

All of these patterns and differences are strongly gendered. Women's work is much more commonly unpaid than men's, or not considered as work at all and therefore invisible, and women are over-represented in most of the more precarious categories of employment, as well as among the unemployed.

The primary goal of the ILO today is to promote opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity. Because of the diversity of forms of work, this goal is complex. First it is necessary to encompass all workers; the fundamental principle is that all those who work, both women and men, have rights at work. That means not only wage workers in formal enterprises, but also the self-employed, casual and informal workers, the hidden, predominantly female workers of
the care economy or of the domestic scene. Freedom, equity, security and dignity may take varying forms in different environments, although the underlying principle is the same. The ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work captures vital dimensions of this vision: freedom of association, absence of discrimination and forced labour, rejection of child labour. Beyond these fundamental rights there are other concerns, such as the safety of the working environment, the duration and intensity of work, the possibilities for personal fulfilment, protection against contingencies and uncertainties. Then, work should be productive, if it is to provide a decent income. And above all, work should be available to those who want and need it.

These ideas, taken together, constitute the essence of the notion of decent work. The word "decent", it is sometimes said, sets the bar too low. Decent can merely mean the opposite of "indecent", a level of bare adequacy. But the word also has the meaning, in English, of meeting or exceeding core social standards - setting a threshold for work and employment which embodies universal rights, and which for a given society is consistent with its values and goals. In this sense, what is seen as "decent" evolves as the possibilities of societies also evolve, so the threshold advances with economic and social progress.

How can the goal of promoting decent work be achieved? In the work of the ILO it is seen as the synthesis of four strategic objectives:

- Achieving fundamental principles and rights at work
- Creation of greater employment and income opportunities for women and men
- Extending social protection, and
- Promoting social dialogue

These objectives are closely intertwined: respect for fundamental principles and rights is a precondition for the construction of a socially legitimate labour market; social dialogue the means by which workers, employers and their representatives engage in debate and interchange on the means to achieve this. Employment creation is the essential instrument for raising living standards and widening access to incomes, while social protection provides the means to achieve income security and security of the working environment.

These different dimensions of decent work reinforce each other. Often, the labour market is interpreted in terms of simple tradeoffs, so that raising the quality of jobs is expected to lead to higher labour costs and less employment creation. But most labour markets do not work in so simple a way. Better quality jobs are very often more productive. They also generate trust and cooperation, and physical and human investment which raises productivity further. Above all, they are a building block for social legitimacy, and so for the longer term stability of economic development. The link between the social and economic values of work, and the conditions under which it is performed is therefore at the heart of a strategy for promoting decent work. And a widening understanding of this reality is itself a source of social progress - for example, a better understanding of gender inequalities in the labour market has made them part of the debate on the legitimacy of dominant models of development.
Pursuing this strategy, then, means bringing together different instruments - legal, economic and institutional. Institutions and approaches have to be developed which make social policy a productive factor, and which build wider social goals into economic policy. For, while it is true that decent work can be a foundation for economic progress, it can only play this role if the institutional framework is right. That means enterprises which are not only competitive but also able to respond to the goals and objectives of workers. It means labour market institutions which promote consistency between social and economic goals, and provide incentives to achieve that objective. It means possibilities for democratic participation and debate.

Legitimacy also demands universality. This means designing policies which encompass both women and men, taking into account how gender inequality is built into the functioning of the labour market and even into the common view of what is considered productive work. It also means implementing effective policies for workers in small and informal enterprises, in homeworking and in casual jobs, and for members of disadvantaged minorities and workers with disabilities.

This is also an issue with a global dimension. Policies to promote decent work need to be set in an increasingly integrated world economy, where the opportunities facing enterprises constantly change, with implications for jobs and labour markets. Globalization has opened up new opportunities for growth and employment. But if the institutional framework is wrong, intensified competition on global markets can also lead to a downward spiral in wages and working conditions, while unstable financial flows put both economic and social progress at risk. Again, these risks and opportunities are asymmetrical between genders. In facing these challenges, the international community is realizing that the integrated problems of development cannot be tackled with sectoral solutions. And in an integrated response, decent work provides a crucial and central dimension, a way to build social standards into development and into effective participation in the international economy.

**Armed Conflict and Employment Promotion**

"Men and women experience and respond to conflict in different ways. It is thus essential to consider such responses in programme design and implementation"

~Eugenia Date-Bah

There are many faces to the gender impact of armed conflict. The type of conflict, demographic changes, the disruption of the economy and the labour market, and the peace process all have profound implications for women and the structure of gender roles, both during and after conflict. Economic hardship, physical insecurity, and women's unequal access to resources can increase their vulnerability during conflict, especially due to the increased numbers of women who become heads of households. At the same time, women are seen to step out of their socially ascribed roles to respond to crisis. This variation in roles can make it easier for women to enter previously male-dominated sectors and contribute to the breakdown of stereotypes that impede their advancement in the economic, political and social spheres. It is an opportunity that can be
capitalized upon through gender-sensitive employment promotion and skills-training programmes.

The planning process is central to ensuring that the gender implications of conflicts are fully reflected in programming. The use of gender analysis, gender-disaggregated statistics (i.e., statistics broken down by sex) and community-based participation can help to emphasize the distinct impact of conflict on women and men. They also serve to point out past imbalances and disparities that should be corrected. For these tools to be used to their full potential, planners themselves should be trained in gender issues and analysis, especially with reference to the conflict-affected environment.

Programmes in reintegration, reconstruction and peace-building should be guided by the principle of contributing to a more just and equitable society in which previously marginalized groups, particularly women, become full players in the redevelopment of the country. However, the urgent demands of conflicts pose many challenges to the establishment of stability and prosperity. At the household level, men and women have difficulty adjusting and readjusting to the change in roles which frequently occurs during a war. Yet, there are opportunities which can also be drawn upon, such as new skills learned, the cessation of violence, and new market possibilities.

The challenge is to maximize opportunities and overcome constraints. Adopting a community-based, inclusive approach is central to reducing competition within and between different groups. Using artificially constructed categories of war-affected populations masks the differential impact of conflicts on an individual's experiences, and can create, rather than minimize, conflict within communities. This is true for women's projects which exclude men. Segregating women and men often reinforces assumptions of women's vulnerability and victimization, and creates gender conflict and competition.

Gender-based assumptions also need to be challenged in demobilization programmes, which primarily target men to the exclusion of female ex-combatants and kin of demobilized soldiers. As efforts focus on channelling male aggression into productive activities, the particular needs and issues of female veterans are often left out. Moreover, the implications of demobilization for the family are seldom considered.

While conflicts intensify vulnerabilities among households, communities and individuals, the capabilities which people and communities have are less apparent. These capabilities should be identified, and programmes should try to strengthen them to improve the present situation and reduce the risk of crisis in the future. Recognizing women's capabilities in particular, may well contribute to a greater acceptance of their expanded role in society.

Increasing the gender sensitivity of labour market information systems and personnel will work toward ensuring a more accurate representation of women. Labour ministries can benefit from training in gender awareness, as well as the establishment of gender focal points in bureaus responsible for labour and economic policies and increased participation of women professionals in policy development. Civil society groups, including labour unions and women's organizations, have an important role to play as advocates of policies and practices which promote gender
equality. Here, too, statutes and legislation which have hampered women's access to more productive livelihoods, such as property rights and eligibility for credit, should be considered.

The rehabilitation of physical infrastructure is critical to women in their productive and reproductive capacities, and therefore requires women's involvement at all levels, and sensitivity to the constraints posed by their roles, such as child-care obligations, time pressures, health concerns, etc. Skills acquired through these programmes may also serve the long-term interests of expanding women's entry into non-traditional, more lucrative professions.

**Vocational training** can offer women the opportunity to enhance prospects for employment and increased income earnings. There are, however, a number of constraints to women's participation in, and benefits from, these programmes. Life-skills can be an important value-added component to vocational training courses. Basic literacy, numeracy, health-care information, etc., can also be made available through such programmes. It is important that information on health, child care, and other such topics also be provided to male trainees, for gender roles will not change unless efforts are made to extend knowledge of "female responsibilities" to men.

**Microenterprise** and microcredit also offer women the opportunity to earn an income. There is a clear need to invest in business training, advice and information, as well as flexible and creative microfinance institutions to provide financing, which will form the basis for more profitable enterprises and the increased economic empowerment of women.

As conflicts increase the number of vulnerable people, the need for **social security and protection systems** is underscored. For women, expanded social insurance packages and basic living allowances can prevent them from adopting dangerous coping strategies, such as sex work, which increase their vulnerabilities in the long term.

With a historic mandate in both peace-building through employment, and in gender equality, the ILO is well placed to demonstrate the inherent link between them by advocating and promoting the visibility and participation of women in reintegration, reconstruction and peace-building. In its advisory services, monitoring of the application of international labour standards and provision of technical assistance such as employment promotion and skills-training, the ILO can play an important role in acknowledging, accounting for, and tackling the problematic gender impacts of conflict, with a view toward creating a more equitable and just society.

**The challenges of globalization: A fast-changing world of work**

Globalization is the progressive integration of societies and national economies in different parts of the world. It is driven by the interaction of technological developments, trade and investment policy reforms, and the changing production, organizational and marketing strategies of multinational companies. The pace and depth of globalization differ across countries and regions, but the main economic aspects of the process are essentially the same.

**Effects of Globalization**
• Competition has intensified among firms in export markets and among countries seeking to attract and increase incoming foreign direct investment
• New locations for production are emerging around the world as multinational companies internationalize production and concentrate on product specialization
• Multinational companies are playing a central role. Their total incoming and outgoing foreign direct investment stocks amounted to 21% of world gross domestic product (GDP) in 1997
• Short-term financial transactions are outstripping world exports. For instance, in 1989 average daily turnover in foreign exchange markets worldwide was 56 times the daily volume of world exports of goods and services. In 1998 it was at least 78 times more, according to the ILO
• Technological innovation, and especially the convergence of information and communication technologies, have transformed production processes, shortened product life cycles and revolutionized services by making more of them tradeable.

Globalization: The opportunities

Jobs are being created as business opportunities increase with the reduction of trade barriers and the decentralization of production to take advantage of benefits specific to the location of their facilities (e.g., low-cost unskilled and skilled labour). The most striking is the case of export processing zones (EPZs), as described elsewhere.

Other developments are the subcontracting of activities by companies, greater specialization and new forms of work organization. All have some positive direct and indirect effects on employment. The spread of subcontracting has generated at least 200 million jobs worldwide. New forms of work organization have been accompanied by a rise in non-standard forms of employment, with advantages for certain groups. Workers with family responsibilities, highly skilled professionals, migrants and adults undergoing some form of training have been able to opt for part-time, temporary, home-based and fixed-term employment.

Greater specialization and the widespread application of advanced technologies have stimulated a rise in demand for skilled labour in fields such as information technology (IT), specialized financial and other business services, materials engineering and biotechnology. On the whole, job opportunities for women in high-growth sectors remain limited, mainly because of lack of required skills.

Mixed experiences

Available evidence suggests that as a group, women are lagging behind when it comes to the gains from globalization. What accounts for this? Certain structural factors, among others, help to explain:

• Technological change and specialized production strategies tend to favor skilled and well-educated workers - a category in which women are severely under-represented
Investing in skills in those segments of the labour market in which women are predominant are considered to yield lower returns. Therefore, opportunities for skills upgrading at the enterprise level are fewer than those which exist for men.

Whether they are in export-oriented or import-competing industries, women are in jobs which are more likely to be subcontracted, relocated abroad or eliminated by labour-saving technologies.

Amid growing competitive pressures, new forms of work organization are being introduced by many enterprises as part of their efficiency-enhancing and cost-saving strategies. This leads to a rise in non-standard employment; i.e., lack of job security (certain enterprises do not give written employment contracts), limited possibilities for training and career advancement, and inadequate social security coverage in terms of old-age pensions, sickness insurance and maternity protection.

The traditional gender disparities in wages appear to be widening in globalizing economies. This may be explained by the cumulative effects of persistent discriminatory practices, a deepening polarization of skilled and unskilled labour with women being caught in a "low-skilled/low-paid jobs trap", and low unionization rates which exclude them from the coverage of collective agreements which set basic pay rates and working conditions.

**Policy responses**

Some degree of government intervention, with the involvement of the social partners, would seem justifiable in order to attain the twin goals of growth and equity. Measures may include:

- Passing equality-promoting legislation to protect women against discriminatory practices with respect to recruitment, remuneration and promotion
- Strengthening labour inspection services to monitor the implementation of national labour standards
- Extending collective agreements to cover non-organized workers in specific sectors and industries where pay and working conditions compare unfavourably with those of organized workers in the same sectors and industries
- Reforming social insurance systems to enable workers in non-standard employment to have better coverage
- Improving social "safety nets" to guarantee minimum standards of protection for vulnerable groups such as the working poor, the long-term unemployed and single-parent households
- Setting enrollment and graduation targets for girls and women in educational institutions at all levels, with a view to raising knowledge and skills which would enhance their employability
- Instituting curriculum reforms, scholarship programmes and advisory services, to orient women to disciplines and training programmes in fields for which labour demand is forecast to grow
- Encouraging social dialogue and active participation by employers' and workers' organizations in policymaking, and developing programmes which focus on:
  - Improving women's access to enterprise-based apprenticeship programmes and on-the-job training for workers
  - Targeting the retraining of women in non-traditional fields and providing various forms of assistance to those women wishing to set up their own businesses, paying particular attention to rural-based women who want to diversify into non-farm activities
• Providing adequate child care and other services to facilitate women's employment and labour market re-entry after interruptions for family-related reasons.

Gender inequalities in the labour market and at the level of the workplace are not new, but the changes associated with globalization appear to be accentuating the effects of attitudinal, policy-related and structural factors which have long interacted to limit women's social and economic progress. The appropriate mix of policies for addressing these issues will necessarily differ across countries, but there are four "social pillars" which ought to underpin whatever measures may be taken to spread the gains from globalization among workers in general, and women workers in particular.

The four social pillars

- Equality of access to education and training
- A well functioning social safety net
- Labour regulations which combine the need for adaptability with that of protection
- The observance of core labour standards

Child labour: A fair break for children

ILO estimates that there are some 250 million children, between the age of 5 and 14 years, engaged in child labour, 110 million of whom are girls. This figure is probably far higher, since it is based on economic activity and does not include full-time housework. Working girls deserve special attention as they are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse, and are more likely to be denied the right to education. For this reason, the ILO, through the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), identifies the working girl as a priority target group. As shown in the following Table, compiled by the ILO Bureau of Statistics, girls are to be found labouring alongside boys in almost all sectors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Both sexes (%)</th>
<th>Boys (%)</th>
<th>Girls (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Industries with economically active children:</td>
<td>70.4</td>
<td>68.9</td>
<td>75.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, hunting, forestry and fishing</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wholesale and retail trade, restaurants and hotels</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community, social and personal services</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, storage and communication</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining and quarrying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically active children</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boy/girl ratio at work</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Children attending school</td>
<td>39-87</td>
<td>49-50</td>
<td>23-84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Of whom with economic activity</td>
<td>00-33</td>
<td>00-25</td>
<td>00-42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
- Not attending school          13-61  10-51  16-77
Of whom in economic activity only   39-56  56-74  23-38
Of whom in housekeeping activity only  12-32  8-14  15-49
Children in hazardous work         34-68  33-67  27-69

Although IPEC’s action programmes deal with boys and girls alike, the work girls do is often "invisible" and their problems and "survival strategies" are different from those of working boys. Girls usually start working at an earlier age than boys, particularly in rural areas where the majority of child labour is located (Ashagrie, 1997: 6). In addition, on average girls work longer hours than boys, and they are paid less for the same type of work (ILO 1997). Girls are also less likely to receive payment for their work, and therefore to receive the benefits and bargaining power that come with access to economic resources, including the ability to access an income with which to get an education. If they do receive payment, they are also less likely to keep the income they earn. For example, one piece of research found that more than 50 per cent of employed girls received no cash payment for their work, as compared to only 7 per cent of boys and where they did receive payment, 96 per cent handed over their entire salary to their family, as compared to 52 per cent of working boys (Chatterjee Schlachter 1993 quoted in Moore 1994: 23).

The new Convention on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 1999 (No. 182), and Recommendation, 1999 (No. 190)
The concern regarding the specific vulnerabilities of girls is reflected in the new Convention and Recommendation on the Worst Forms of Child Labour, which were adopted unanimously by the constituent members of the ILO in June 1999. In particular, several Articles and paragraphs make explicit reference to the need to take account of the special situation of girls, while others make implicit reference to areas where girls are likely to be found working.

Girls also are far less likely to receive any form of basic education. In fact, girls account for two of every three children in the developing world who do not receive a primary education (approximately 73 million of the 130 million out-of-school children) (UNICEF 1999: 8). Even if they are attending school, girls are almost twice as likely to be tired from the burden of housework, to the extent that full participation in class is limited. This leads to higher dropout rates, lower school enrolment rates and early marriages for girls compared to boys.

How does IPEC identify and target working girls?

- By placing explicit emphasis on girls as a target group in national plans of action, and in the design of each action programme
- By targeting those economic sectors where many girls are found (i.e., prostitution and domestic work)
- By ensuring that where possible, projects run for "visible working boys" also target invisible working girls
By targeting the poorest; i.e., single, female-headed households, and targeting mothers together with fathers in projects for child workers

By mobilizing women's organizations and activists

The early discrimination that girls face, results in their growing up to be women with greater constraints and fewer choices and opportunities. They in turn are less able to positively influence the lives of their daughters (and sons), thereby perpetuating the vicious cycle of poverty and exploitation from one generation of women to the next. This is not to minimize the experience of boys, nor to suggest that boys should be excluded, but it is only through a gender perspective that captures the different experiences of child labourers, that the special needs that arise from those experiences can be addressed.

So far, IPEC programmes have been carried out for working girls in bonded labour, prostitution, domestic work and manufacturing. Where the forms of work are clearly hazardous, the most immediate recourse is to remove them from such work, rehabilitate them and reintegrate them into family, community and society.

### Girls vs. Boys

*Girls are more likely to:*

- Begin working at an earlier age
- Be paid less for the same work
- Be concentrated in sectors and areas having low pay and long hours
- Work in hidden and unregulated sectors, making them more vulnerable to exploitation and abuse
- Be victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation or other extreme forms of work
- Be excluded from education, or suffer the triple burden of housework, school work and economic work

Working girls withdrawn from their work are given basic education or vocational training, medical help and nutritional support. Their families are offered support, including skills-training (Nepal), livelihood and income generation (Bangladesh and Brazil), nutrition and health support (Pakistan, Indonesia and Kenya). Action programmes carried out by local NGOs with the support of the ILO have set up transit homes and temporary shelters for girls at risk of being tricked into prostitution (Nepal and Thailand) and for street girls (Kenya). Activities to inform girls of their rights and the setting up of crisis hot lines have also been supported (Kenya, Tanzania, and the Philippines), while in Tanzania an agency of women journalists and lawyers has extended its outreach programme to halt violence against women to include a campaign highlighting the situation of child domestic workers. In the Mekong Basin countries, (Thailand, Cambodia, China and Vietnam) and the south Asian countries (Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), IPEC is implementing a second phase major regional programme to stop child trafficking for prostitution and other extreme forms of child labour.
IPEC's goal is not just the removal of individual children from work in which they are exploited, but the long-term goal which will be achieved when new generations of children are effectively prevented from entering the labour market. To achieve this, a change in social attitudes is important, particularly towards girls, their special vulnerabilities and their right to education. IPEC is developing a strategy for making gender issues an integral part of its programmes by incorporating a gender component into IPEC's structure, sub-programmes and operations. At the national level, this will be extended to include a gender component into national plans of action, and into its problem analysis and programme design. In addition, strategies will be reviewed to ensure that support and incentives given to the family of a working child are not gender-biased, especially in the area of skills-training and access to microcredit resources.

Collective Bargaining: An Instrument for Equality

Collective bargaining is crucial to the promotion of equality in employment. Well beyond maternity leave and benefits, a broad range of specific gender issues should be considered in the negotiations, as well as the gender implications of "traditional" bargaining issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why bargain for gender equality? For several reasons:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Women's concerns have traditionally been overlooked in this process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Legislative rights and protection of working women may be inadequate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Even in the presence of legislation, implementation and enforcement may be ineffective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- &quot;Traditional&quot; and apparently &quot;neutral&quot; attitudes about women in employment must be changed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Some non-pay issues may be easier to bargain for in difficult economic times</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- It demonstrates the commitment of the union and the employer to gender equality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Issues for negotiation

- **Wages and benefits**: Equal pay for work of equal value (and equivalent performance evaluation), overtime available for all workers, job classification, pension schemes, housing benefits, transportation benefits, medical benefits
- **Hours of work**: Basic hours and overtime (no gender differentiation or discrimination), part-time work, flexible working time, job-sharing, night work, accommodating expectant and nursing mothers and those with family responsibilities
- **Leave**: Annual leave, compassionate leave, leave taken to fulfill family responsibilities, medical and sick leave, paid education leave, training leave
- **Health, safety and working environment**: Exposure to chemicals and hazardous substances, carrying heavy weights, hazardous waste, ventilation, noise, work positions, impact of new technologies, control measures and personal protective equipment, welfare facilities and services, accommodating disabled workers, HIV and AIDS information, health and safety committees
- **Job security**: Criteria/schemes for non-discriminatory redundancy
- **Maternity protection and benefits**: Maternity leave, cash benefits, leave and health care in the case of miscarriage or stillbirth, adoption leave, reproductive health care, flexible
working hours, lighter work for pregnant women and nursing mothers, nursing breaks, job security

- **Family responsibilities**: Paternity leave, parental leave, family leave, family care services (child care, care of the elderly), protection against discrimination and victimization
- **Defending the rights of non-permanent and vulnerable workers**: Casual, temporary, task, seasonal, contract, part-time, rural, domestic and migrant workers, homeworkers, indigenous and tribal peoples
- **Dignity at the workplace**: Equal opportunities clause, use of gender-inclusive language, equality officer or women's committee, training in equal opportunities issues for those involved in recruitment and negotiations, sexual harassment policy, information, policies and procedures for reporting, investigating and dealing with violence, including harassment, bullying and mobbing
- **Giving women a voice**: Positive measures in recruitment, training and promotion to overcome the effects of past discrimination and to promote gender balance in the workplace

**Before the negotiations**

Preparing carefully beforehand is essential to ensure that gender issues and perspectives are taken into account in the process. Here's what needs to be done:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparing for effective gender bargaining</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❑ Women's committees or equal opportunities committees should play a key role in formulating demands and examining proposed and existing clauses for discrimination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Determine the views of women who are absent or silent at meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Gather available statistics regarding women in the workplace and the sector (for example, number of women in different job categories, pay differential between women and men)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Existing rights: Determine what rights already exist under the collective agreement, legislation, government policies and work rules, and how collective bargaining can be used to extend or secure existing rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Identify and prioritize the needs of all workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**After the negotiations**

Follow-up beyond the signing of the collective agreement is essential in promoting gender equality in employment. Here's what needs to be done:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post-bargaining measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>❑ Negotiated policies, rights and benefits should be communicated to all workers, permanent and non-permanent, on a regular basis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>❑ Ongoing gathering of statistics on the number of women and men hired, promoted and dismissed, as well as the numbers in all job categories, salary levels and training programmes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Regular monitoring of the implementation and effectiveness of collectively bargained policies, rights and benefits
Include equality issues in educational and training programmes
Publicize the work done by the union and the employer on gender issues

Conditions of work

Maternity protection

There is universal recognition that due to their reproductive function women in the labour market require special protection, both before and after childbirth. Over the years, the ILO has adopted several Conventions and Recommendations dealing with this protection.

Among the first international labour standards to be adopted was the Maternity Protection Convention, 1919 (No. 3), concerning the employment of women just prior to, and after childbirth. This Convention laid out the basic principle of maternity protection: the right to maternity leave, including medical benefits and income replacement. This right was reinforced by explicitly prohibiting notification of dismissal during a woman's absence on maternity leave or if such notice would expire during her absence. Employment security was thus seen as a vital aspect of maternity protection.

The Maternity Protection (Revised) Convention, 1952 (No. 103), retained the same principal elements of protection; i.e., the right to maternity leave, medical care and cash benefits, but the means and manner of providing these benefits were made more explicit. The 12-week minimum leave period was to include a period of mandatory postnatal leave of at least six weeks. Additional leave was to be provided before or after confinement in the event of medically certified illness arising out of pregnancy or confinement. Medical benefits were to include prenatal, confinement and postnatal care by qualified midwives or medical practitioners, as well as hospitalization if necessary. Freedom of choice of doctor and of public or private hospital were to be respected. With regard to cash benefits, a minimum income replacement rate of two-thirds of the woman's previous earnings was specified for those benefits derived from social insurance. Payroll taxes were to be paid on the basis of the total number of workers employed without distinction of sex.

National approaches

Laws designed to protect the health of mother and child and the employment rights of working women figure prominently in the legislation of almost every ILO member State. There are, however, important variations with regard to the scope of coverage, the extent of protection, the complexity of the schemes in force, and the respective responsibility of the State and of individual employers for the provision of cash benefits.

Typically, a simple package includes the provision, under labour legislation, of leave before and after the birth, often with the payment of cash benefits, whether by the employer, out of social
security systems, through public funds, or by a combination of these means. It is unlawful for employers to give notice of dismissal during maternity leave and its eventual extension or at such time as the notice would expire during such leave. Nursing mothers are authorized to take breaks, which are often paid, for breastfeeding.

More comprehensive packages improve on the above provisions in terms of the length of maternity leave, the level of benefits and the length of the period during which employment is protected. They often include a series of measures aimed at protecting the health of the woman and the unborn child, such as the prohibition or limitation of night work or overtime work, and a right to transfer from work which may be detrimental to the outcome of pregnancy either because it is intrinsically dangerous or because it is inadvisable in view of an individual woman's state of health. The health protection measures envisaged for pregnant women often apply also to nursing mothers.

Explicit protection against discrimination is a feature of the most advanced schemes. In a growing number of countries, there is also a move towards adopting a parental approach. Under parental schemes, a period of maternity leave is reserved for the mother, within a longer period of leave which is available to both parents.

As women's employment throughout their childbearing years continues to rise and women return to work after childbirth in ever greater numbers, discussion has begun on possible new international standards on maternity protection. It is expected that new instruments will be adopted in the year 2000.

**Control over Finances**

**Who controls the purse strings?**

Women have increasingly become a key target group for microfinance programs. Providing women entrepreneurs with access to microfinance contributes not only to poverty alleviation but also to women's empowerment. Moreover, because poor women are increasingly recognized to be better borrowers, regular financial institutions are starting to show interest in them.

It is widely assumed that microfinance will have a positive impact on women's livelihood by leading to higher income, which will help women to perform their role as agents of the health, nutritional and educational status of other household members, by increasing women's employment in microenterprises and improving their income-generating productivity, and by enhancing their self-confidence and status within the family as independent producers and providers of valuable cash resources to the household economy.

On average, however, women's access to formal institutional credit is much more restricted than men's. Women's microenterprises have lower sales revenues, fewer assets and smaller profit margins which, under conventional financial criteria, make them high-risk ventures. Because of tradition, customary law and state law on property and land rights, women rarely have property under their names which they can offer to secure loans. Transaction costs are also likely to be
higher for women than men because women tend to have a greater workload, face social restrictions to travel and often lack cash to cover pre-loan expenses, etc. Analysis of the limited number of assessments which exist on the impact of microfinancing demonstrates both positive and negative effects:

- Improvements in women's economic security, bargaining power within the household, self-confidence and health and education of other family members
- Positive effects on the schooling of girls, increase in women's asset holdings (except land) and total household expenditure
- Negative effects of microfinance have been detected with regard to women's workload, repayment burden and the unpaid employment of daughters

Women's control over financial resources is increasingly seen as a key factor in explaining these mixed results. The limited evidence available highlights that a significant proportion of women who may have access to financing, may not have control over the loans obtained. However, the loss of control over financial resources does not necessarily mean that women are worse off in terms of increased social and economic opportunities:

- Even when women lose control over the use of their loans, their overall status in the household may improve due to their role as a financial mediator
- Handing over loans to men may help to secure family stability by easing cashflow bottlenecks in the household
- Women may also use credit as a bargaining chip to gain access to other opportunities offered by financial institutions, such as training, education and information

However, the impact of microfinance services is stronger when women actually control the financial resources acquired in their names. Increased control is likely to contribute to women's empowerment, facilitate women's entrepreneurship, assist them in their household roles and ease their repayment burden.

**Lessons learned: The way forward**

To effectively address the constraints faced by women in their access to and control over finances, support measures are required at many levels.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support measures</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy level:</strong> Surveys and other data collection methods to determine the needs, demands and debt capacity of women, land reform and other legal measures to abolish gender differences in commercial and civil law, the provision of interest rate subsidies, directed credit and portfolio quotas, etc., and, most importantly, the gender-sensitization of policymakers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional level:</strong> Creation of dedicated lending schemes, of gender-specific windows in financial institutions or gender-sensitization of existing financial institutions.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Direct support: Literacy campaigns, primary education of girls and the dissemination of sensitization information about financial sector institutions and available targeted schemes, encouragement and support to group-based savings and credit functions and organizations which promote women's associations.

Other strategic options

- Loans in kind, small amounts of credit and savings, regular occasions for deposits
- Supporting activities which are controlled by women, which can be marketed from the home and/or result in income during the season when the woman is acting as the head of the household
- Numeracy and literacy training for women, skills-training, especially bookkeeping and accounting
- Legal literacy and awareness-raising for both men and women, more women staff at all levels of financial institutions
- Group formation for economy of scale (access to markets, land and other productive resources) and federation for leadership training
- Registering and insuring assets acquired through loans on borrower's name, insist on proof of managerial control over enterprise, close monitoring of loan use by financial institution, and mandatory savings on women's individual accounts

Self-Support: A case study

The Working Women's Forum (WWF) in India was set up in 1978 to organize poor working women in the slum areas of Madras. Its membership has since expanded and now also covers three other states. Members are engaged in a variety of trades. WWF field workers encourage women to form groups of 20 to 30 members usually along occupational and neighbourhood lines. Each group elects a leader; the group leaders elect an area leader to sit on the WWF Governing Board.

Loans were obtained initially from commercial banks, but due to constraints met in dealing with them, the WWF set up its own credit cooperative in 1981, the Working Women's Credit Society (WWCS). Loans are granted at an effective rate of interest of about 8%. Groups begin with small short-term loans. Less formal procedures are applied than at commercial banks, such as accepting photographs in place of signatures for identification. Each group leader assumes liability for the members' loans and supervises loan applications and repayment, while the group exerts peer pressure to ensure repayment. The repayment rate stands at over 96%.
Cooperatives

Accelerating progress

More than 800 million women and men across the globe are members of cooperatives, and an additional 100 million non-members work in them. Cooperatives are associations of men and women who have joined together to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs and aspirations through jointly-owned, democratically controlled enterprises.

Although the cooperative movement started as small grassroots organizations in Western Europe, Northern America and Japan in the middle of the last century, today cooperatives are a major economic force in sectors ranging from banking, insurance, modern industrial and service companies to agricultural marketing and small and medium sized handicrafts industries. New and innovative cooperatives are being created, such as Internet providers and TV cable stations and the so-called "new cooperatives" in certain countries.

The issues

Gender equality is promoted through globally adopted principles and values which emphasize self-help, democracy, social responsibility, equality and equity. However, cooperatives are influenced by the society in which they operate, and though most have policies on equal opportunities and treatment for men and women, actual practice may differ.

A most important gender issue worldwide is women's low level of active participation and their under-representation in decision-making and leadership positions. For cooperatives to function as democratic, member-driven organizations or enterprises, women must have equal access to decision-making processes. If they are not represented or are under-represented when decisions are being taken, their needs and interests cannot be adequately addressed, nor can they be expected to accept the legitimacy of the decisions taken on their behalf.

Another critical issue is whether male and female members have equal access to, and control over, cooperative resources such as credit and finance, education and training, production inputs
and marketing outlets etc. Many cooperatives provide education and training programmes for their members, but they should ensure that these programmes are equally (and easily) accessible to their women members. Special attention should also be paid to whether these programmes address women's as well as men's needs, expectations and aspirations. Hence the need for gender analysis and planning.

**Emerging trends**

In the rapidly changing global economic environment, cooperatives have been forced to adapt and become more competitive and innovative. They have realized that by developing women's capacities and strengthening their productive capabilities, the cooperatives stand to benefit. By involving more women in decision-making and leadership positions, the scope of cooperatives is broadened, their activities diversified and their social role reinforced. And as important lobbies, they become a stronger economic and more influential political force when more women are actively involved.

Examples have shown that initiatives taken by women have accelerated the progress and change of their socioeconomic situation. In Africa the ACOPAM Programme ("Appui Associatif et Coopératif aux Initiatives de Développement à la Base") in the Sahel region has been one of ILO's most successful employment and income-generation programmes, as has the Zinder Programme in Niger which focuses on local economic development and food security.

**Resolving the issues**

Cooperative leadership can address equality issues by:

- Drawing up gender-sensitive policies, strategies and plans in a joint effort between women and men; e.g., by addressing the problems of women's access to credit, land, equipment, extension services etc., and by taking positive measures to include more women in their training programmes, and in decision-making and leadership positions.
- Awareness creation, gender sensitization, education and lobbying. Cooperatives can help eliminate existing barriers to women's active participation and their access to leadership positions (e.g., membership criteria or legal, traditional, financial, attitudinal constraints).
- Making their training and education programmes sensitive to women needs. Women's capacities and capabilities can be strengthened, resulting in their increased self-confidence and enabling them to participate more fully in decision-making and leadership positions.
- Identifying potential women leaders and helping them gain visibility and experience within the cooperative; for example, through training and providing advisors among management staff ("mentoring").
- Using national organizations and networks to collect gender-disaggregated data (i.e., data broken down by gender) and identifying types of projects focused on women's needs, to help them increase their income-earning capacities and alleviate their work burden. For example, they can study how much time men and women spend on various chores and activities, and how this fits in with potential and economically viable sustainable cooperative activities.
Education and training

A case of unequal access

Girls and women in most developing countries have far less access to quality education and training than do their male counterparts. This is a major economic and social development issue. It begins with basic education and continues through to higher education. A firm linkage has been demonstrated between greater access of girls to educational opportunities and improvements in health, family planning, and economic development.

Another potential challenge exists in many of the more economically developed countries of the OECD, and in the Caribbean; namely, a trend toward a growing disproportion of far higher female enrollment and graduation rates at secondary levels, and even more at higher levels. Paradoxically, in the future this could create barriers to equal access for young males in the form of higher dropout rates at secondary level and restrictions on access to higher education, even as gender segregation in secondary technical education and in higher education continues.

One contributing factor in both contexts is persistent gender disequilibrium in the teaching profession, including technical and vocational education. The minority position of women teachers in certain regions - Africa and south Asia in particular - has been directly linked to the under-enrollment and high dropout rates of girls. The small number of women teachers and trainers to serve as role models and advisors capable of encouraging girls and women to pursue careers in technical trades, is another - and important - barrier to equality of opportunity in these fields.

Recent research by the ILO suggests that the highly feminized nature of the teaching profession in some countries may have a negative impact on improvements in salaries and other conditions of service which contribute to a higher professional status, recruitment and maintenance of high quality graduates in teaching, and ultimately, quality education for both males and females. Continued prosperity and a dynamic labour market in many OECD countries continues to attract many highly qualified men and women to career choices other than teaching, leading to shortages - in both numbers and quality - which are likely to be aggravated as a "graying" teaching profession faces large-scale departures of professionals from the present generation.

Women in education

There is a preponderance of women teachers at the pre-primary level in almost all countries (more than 90% in most, a minimum of 50% in the rest) and at the primary level (over 80%) and secondary level (60%) in most developed countries. This trend has continued to rise in the 1990s. Yet, women teachers constitute only one-third of all teachers at the primary level in developing countries taken as a whole, and less than 30% at secondary level, with a trend toward very slow increases in the numbers of women teachers at both levels.

With rare exception, however, women are seriously under-represented in senior teaching and management posts. Moreover, despite the absence of more detailed data disaggregated
broken down) by sex in most countries, in almost all regions, *de facto*, women earn less overall than men because of lower qualifications (in many developing countries), interruptions in their careers for family responsibilities, and their relative absence from positions of responsibility. Some indications of sexual harassment have been noted as impeding careers. However, the largest barrier to equality in career development remains male-biased recruitment procedures and criteria, which do not sufficiently account for the demands on women arising from family responsibilities and the persistence of "camouflaged" stereotypes concerning their suitability for leadership roles.

In a few countries, statutory discrimination in the allocation of allowances and subsides also persists. Even in the absence of such discrimination, ILO surveys have shown that women teachers and trainers in many countries earn less than their male counterparts at the same levels, and in the same subjects, at secondary and higher education levels. One contributing factor is that women are not proportionately represented in the decision-making structures of teachers’ unions and professional associations, which has minimized the attention to their concerns in collective bargaining outcomes and professional standard-setting.

There are very few women teachers in technical and vocational education and training, and they are mostly in a limited number of disciplines which are traditionally "feminine", such as secretarial and office work, and domestic science. In higher education, women professors tend to be concentrated in lower-level institutions out of all proportion to their numbers. And they are at the lower rungs of the career ladder in the high prestige universities, and in managerial positions concerned with areas such as student services rather than the most important academic posts of dean or head of department.

**Progress and achievements**

In order to influence increases in enrollments and completion of studies by girl students in countries where women teachers are relatively few - especially in rural areas - some educational authorities have instituted special programmes to recruit, train, and guarantee accommodation for women teachers. Other countries have established special programmes to award seniority credits for women who interrupt careers for family reasons, they have created joint (male and female) promotion panels, introduced quotas, or extended training programmes to encourage women to remain in teaching and to gain greater access to responsible posts.

### What else can be done?

- Include gender issues in education policy documents, including national plans, promote gender awareness and give problem-solving training for members of policy and planning units
- Systematically collect and use sex-disaggregated data on the numbers of women teachers/trainers, their location by rural or urban area, rank in the education or public service and position on the salary scale
- Design and implement gender training packages at teacher training institutions and in continuing training programmes
- Provide material and administrative support for gender-specific training programmes for women, to focus on developing leadership capacity
• Systematically review and eliminate any overt discrimination in remuneration scales (base salary and allowances) and teaching service regulations, as well as any practices of sexual harassment
• Within teachers' unions and professional associations, establish awareness and training programmes to help propel more women teachers into positions of responsibility in teachers' organisations and professional bodies

Employers' activities

Improving productivity

Why should employers be concerned about gender equality? Is it because it is the law in many countries? Because of social and employee pressure in the workplace? Or because employers may simply find it worthwhile to do so? And what does incorporating gender-based policies mean for business? Equal opportunity policies provide employers with a wider and more diverse range of potential applicants, thus improving the chances of obtaining the best person for the job. Moreover, employers can improve the likelihood of increased motivation, productivity, efficiency, and flexibility in the use of human resources.

Employer strategies in the private sector

Employers' organizations are concerned with creating and maintaining productive employment to help alleviate unemployment and poverty. Women contribute their part in alleviating these social problems and yet make up only a small proportion of employers as opportunities to education, training, and participation in substantial economic activities have been limited until now.

In order to adopt strategies, one must recognize and address the obstacles to surmount. At the workplace level, the following obstacles should be tackled by equal opportunity policies:

Obstacles in the workplace

- Biased recruitment and promotion systems
- Mobility requirements
- Seniority requirements
- Male networks influencing promotion
- Work organization and long hours
- Job design - lower skill requirements for "women's jobs"
- Family responsibilities
Overcoming the obstacles

- Enforcement of equality laws
- Effective complaint procedures
- Positive action measures
- Revaluing feminine occupations
- More women in traditional male jobs
- Raising awareness
- Family-care assistance
- Build networks of women's organizations

Key gender issues for employers' organizations therefore focus upon incorporating gender equality for economic development through:

- Recognizing the value and contributions of women for the complete use of human resources
- Encouraging equality in employment and increasing the participation of women managers and business entrepreneurs
- Expanding education and training opportunities, particularly for the educationally disadvantaged female
- Increasing the opportunities for competitive and productive positions are fundamental to integrate women in the mainstream of business

Equal opportunity policies

To avert gender-based job segregation, employers should adopt policies and programs to:

- Promote a positive environment at the workplace level compatible with employment creation, with favorable working conditions and welfare for everyone
- Influence government legislation which would incorporate gender analysis to complement and reinforce equal opportunity at all levels
- Devise training programs to enhance skills and inputs, upgrade the work performance of entrepreneurs, the self-employed, professionals, and increase the opportunities for women moving into non-traditional jobs and managerial positions
- Enforce strict policies to eliminate sexual harassment and discrimination
- Encourage family-friendly policies which take into account the social benefits of families such as family leave, and health care for men and women which supports equal family responsibility and benefits for both parents as well as for single parents and those with multiple jobs

Equal opportunity policies and programs should be designed to promote greater access to economic activities by doing away with gender bias. The following recommendations to incorporate gender issues in equal opportunity policies and programs should be considered:
• Project staff, national planners and policy makers should be sensitized to the importance of gender considerations at the project planning, implementation and evaluation stages
• Collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data on women's participation in various levels of the workplace with a view to assessing women's special needs and problems, and to increase their participation rates
• Networking with other institutions and associations, particularly in the design and implementation of programs to promote gender equality in employment and in the socioeconomic development of society
• Human resources development and management skills training to help prepare, improve, and sustain, the capacities of women in technical and vocational fields
• Disseminate information and training materials on the effective integration of women's concerns in private sector activities

Empowerment and Equality

Poverty and backlash

Alarming signs of increasing female poverty and a severe backlash to social development are being noted everywhere today. Unequal access to resources and their control, as well as certain negative trends in the global and local economies, are seriously hampering the process of progressive gender equalization in nearly every part of the world. At the same time, the policy and legal international framework for achieving women's empowerment and gender equality have never been so strong.

More than ever, therefore, it is imperative to be vigilant and to introduce initiatives and concrete programmes to fulfill the commitments taken by the international community in the active promotion of human rights, women's advancement and gender equality. More than ever also, a concerted effort is needed, involving all the potential players, and following the main trends and action determined in international conferences, constantly updated and confirmed in consultations with responsible authorities and forums.

An ILO response

Training, the sharing of information and experience, sensitization, and the exchange of models and best practices are some of the tools offered by the International Training Centre of the ILO in Turin (Italy), as a response to these concerns.

The new mandate of the Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality Programme (WEGE) at the Turin Centre attempts to incorporate two approaches to the problem. The women's empowerment aspect suggests specific interventions for supporting and strengthening women's capacities in all sectors of the mandate of the ILO, with the aim of resolving existing problems of discrimination. The gender equality aspect introduces a new gender dimension into training for policymakers and planning and programming personnel - both male and female. It also widens
the scope of information, dissemination and sensitization activities, offering to women and men alike an awareness of existing international instruments dealing with the subject.

The main aims of the WEGE programme are equality and equal opportunity for both women and men at work - and in a broader perspective, in society in general. Specific objectives are set forth and apply to each training activity. They include:

The WEDGE Programme:

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<th>Objectives:</th>
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<td>• Enjoyment by women of their economic and social rights</td>
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<td>• Full participation in economic activities at national and local levels</td>
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<td>• Participation without discrimination in vocational training and education</td>
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<td>• Elimination of violence against women (from sexual harassment at the workplace to violence in armed conflicts)</td>
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<td>• Bringing gender perspective to the forefront in all policies and programmes at the international, national and local levels</td>
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<td>• Human rights of women (including special groups, such as disabled women, and covering institutional capacity-building; e.g., strengthening of national machineries)</td>
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<td>• Policies and strategies for women entrepreneurship (high-level interventions)</td>
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<td>• Capacity-building in gender equality, poverty eradication and employment promotion</td>
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<td>• National country programmes implemented for the most part at the field level, with major involvement of national counterparts (traditional tripartite partners plus women's NGOs and civil organizations)</td>
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<td>• Turin-based sub-regional, regional or inter-regional training activities with a specific target and an accurate selection of participants, so that their participation may have a direct impact in the articulation of policies and strategies at the national level</td>
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Target groups for the activities of the Centre are women and men alike, and include representatives of governments, members of parliaments, employers' and workers' organizations, members of specialized NGOs, universities, associations, bodies (both at the policy and operational levels, including trainers), media specialists, etc. All regions are targeted, primarily with a national or sub-regional focus.

The WEDGE programme includes:

- Policy making workshops and meetings
- Training courses and seminars
- Training packages and other tools
A set of "core curricula", related to the priority areas defined previously is regularly proposed as part of the annual Centre's training offer. In addition to these, other well-tested courses may be easily implemented on an ad hoc basis.

WEDGE training courses and seminars presented by the Centre, dealing with gender issues, include:

- Women's rights
- Women entrepreneurship development
- Local development with a gender perspective
- Gender, poverty and employment

Descriptions of these courses and seminars, as well as a list of multimedia modular training packages developed by the Centre dealing with these and related issues, may be obtained from the Turin Centre itself.

**Equality in the Urban Informal Sector**

**Designing a Balanced Strategy**

Women suffer some of the most acute and the most intractable forms of "informalization" in economic life. Their options are typically the most narrow, and their contributions to society the least valued. Especially when they are poor, they are left the economic crumbs which no one else wants; and, as they must work, they have no choice but the informal sector. While struggling to turn these crumbs into incomes, they are hamstrung with the many legal and administrative handicaps which informal work entrains.

Direct intervention to help specific groups of poor women certainly has its value, but the underlying issues in the social, cultural, economic and political environment which caused these women to become poor and marginalized in the first place, must be addressed. This is the true challenge, and it requires action at a number of levels. Each effort must interact with and strengthen action at other levels, even when they appear unrelated to either gender or the informal sector. This synergy is critical. Development is about social, economic and political change, not just economic growth. In fact, a development effort which does not lead to these deeper social, economic and political changes reinforces the status quo.

What is needed, then, is a development model which keeps these deeper issues in clear focus. It should also draw the many actors working at these various levels into conscious step with one another. What is needed, in other words, is easily understood strategic goals around which various programmes and projects can be orchestrated, plus flexible basic mechanisms to identify how any proposal will impact women in the informal sector.
This can be achieved through a two-layered process: a) three "meta-tests" against which all projects are screened, and b) four "strategic cornerstones" around which specific activities aimed specifically at poor women in the informal sector focus their energies.

**The meta-tests**

It is crucial that those in authority "see" the linkages between their decisions and the informal sector, as well as the subtle gender biases and stereotypes woven into their own work. For these linkages exist. So, in addition to its own technical integrity, every development proposal should also meet the following three "meta-tests".

**Three Meta-Tests:**

**Visibility**

"Invisibility" is one of the most important causes of both informal sector work and women's poverty. The proposal must explicitly analyze its impact on the poor, especially poor women, and this should be a separate and central element in the justification for the proposal.

**Voice**

The participation of people in decisions which affect them, through organizations of their own choosing, is a basic human right. They should be consulted both about the need for the project on the one hand, and about the efficacy of the proposed remedy on the other.

**Subsidiarity**

This is the principle that a higher authority should perform only those tasks which cannot be performed effectively at a more immediate or local level. The proponents of the proposal should demonstrate effectively that the local people affected by it cannot do it themselves, or at least a large portion of it. The issue should not be just that they currently do not do it, or not as well as the higher authority thinks it can do it for them.

**Effective project design**

A strategic response to the challenge of increasingly feminized poverty will normally include project "interventions" aimed at resolving the specific issues of particular target groups. The following four "cornerstones" of effective project design are points of reference around which to identify and design these various projects as the specific needs require. At the same time they ensure that individual interventions have the desired cumulative effect on rooting out the underlying causes of the "feminization" of poverty.

**Four Cornerstones**

**I. Integration**
There is only one economy (and increasingly a global one) in two parts, one functioning "formally" and enjoying the benefit of social, political and legal protections, and a second shadowy or "informal" part which slips through this underlying regulatory infrastructure. These parts interact with each other and are interdependent. It is crucial for informal sector projects to recognize this wholeness and to strengthen integration and a sense of common interest, rather than separateness and conflicting or independent interests.

II. Regulation

A minimum basic regulatory system is necessary to protect not just fundamental human rights but also various essential business or economic "rights", such as the legal protections of property and contracts. Informal sector operators, especially female operators, need this protection of their economic rights as well as of their human rights.

III. Coordination

Lasting results on cross-cutting issues like gender or the informal sector are achieved when the behaviour of many institutions and organizations with a variety of distinct technical mandates changes, and when these changes reinforce each other. This means a substantial investment of time and energy into coordination, orchestration and dialogue, even at the cost of immediate or short-term impact.

IV. Participation

Participation is linked to the voice "meta-test". It means the active, timely, and substantive involvement in the design and implementation of any programme by those whose behaviour is expected to be changed by it. To the extent that the underlying causes of the informal sector lie in the formal sector, it follows that most of the changes needed to improve conditions in the informal sector need to occur in the formal sector. Likewise for gender. Most of the changes needed to ensure gender equality need to be made by men, not women. So, paradoxically, it is men (especially in positions of authority and influence in the public sector) who must be convinced to become involved in gender equality and in solving specific problems of the informal sector.

Export processing zones

Gender-neutral policies?

Globalization has seen a dramatic growth in production chains which now stretch around the world. Export processing zones ((EPZs) house many of the enterprises involved in those chains. There are at least 2,000 EPZs in the world today, employing some 27 million people. Between 60% and 90% of zone workers are women, often young and in their first job. The way these women experience work differs markedly from that of their male counterparts, because women also have domestic responsibilities and occupy socially determined "traditional" positions which complicate their working lives. However, the lack of gender sensitivity on the part of policy-
makers, administrators, employers and even trade unions, means that the special situation of women zone workers is not taken into account. Thus, they are adversely affected by gender-neutral policies which, in practice, discriminate against women.

A day in the life of an EPZ working mother

A typical mother working in a typical EPZ has to rise hours before her shift at the factory begins, because she has to prepare food for the household and care for the children. She may then have to walk a long distance to reach public transport, or even walk all the way to work. So, by the time she gets to work, she is likely to be tired even before she starts her intense 10-hour work shift. She may well not have eaten breakfast and consequently may lack the energy to sustain the output her supervisor expects.

If the machine she operates breaks down she has to call a male technician to fix it. While she is idle she loses out on the piece-rates and production bonuses she would normally be able to obtain. The technician has many people waiting for their machines to be fixed and so he might offer to fix her machine first if she agrees to perform a sexual favour. If she has a daily quota to reach in order to earn the minimum wage, she may have to spend two or three extra (unpaid) hours to finish her work, and if the factory is falling behind in filling orders the workforce may be ordered to work overtime.

This affects both male and female workers, but in general the males do not have to feed, clean and take care of a household. If the extra hours result in her leaving the factory after dark she may be exposed to physical danger, and could have difficulty obtaining transport home. Such 16- to 18-hour days take their toll, and the absenteeism and turnover rates of female zone workers is high. Many burn out and leave after five or six years of zone work. Others marry, have children, and are unable to resume a working life because their domestic responsibilities are too demanding.

Zone administrators and employers are aware of the problems posed by absenteeism, labour turnover and poor productivity, but are often at a loss as to how to deal with them. One obstacle which needs to be overcome is the lack of a gender perspective, without which it is difficult to appreciate the real nature of the problem; namely, the double burden of work and family responsibilities which women workers often have to bear, and the socially defined limits to their education, training and career opportunities. Such a gender perspective would equip policymakers and practitioners alike with the analysis necessary to ensure that women are able to reconcile their work and family responsibilities, and that they receive the access to the training and career opportunities they presently lack.

One example of particular relevance to women is child care. In many EPZs around the world women have difficulty finding suitable facilities for their children while they are at work. This is a time-consuming, expensive and stressful demand on working mothers. In some cases the mother is obliged to stop working altogether to care for the children, depriving the family of her income and the employer of an experienced worker. If zone authorities and employers combined their resources they could establish or support day-care centres which would ease the burden on working mothers and encourage them to return to work after childbirth. Some zone enterprises have established small crèches within the factory premises, while others have supported community-based facilities.

Another important area of concern is training, both vocational and life-skills training. In many EPZs the women are involved in simple processing or assembly tasks and receive only a minimum of training. In the worst cases this means that a woman may work in a garment factory
for five years and not know how to make the complete garment, because she has performed only one repetitive function. This means that she does not have a skill which she can transfer to another type of work. As a result, she may leave zone employment with little chance of finding a job elsewhere. It is essential that EPZ employers be offered incentives to train workers, and that zone administrators provide facilities for ongoing training. If life-skills is also provided, women workers leaving the zone may be able to set up independent income-generating activities based on the skills acquired during their stay in the zone which would also generate employment.

The ILO is currently preparing a manual that will seek to raise awareness about the special situation of women workers in EPZs, and highlight best practices in dealing with the problems they face.

**Health services**

**More men needed and better jobs for women**

Some 9% of the world's GDP is spent in the health sector, which employs about 35 million persons. Beyond the importance of "health for all" per se, this sector is one of the largest and fastest growing in the world economy in terms of both employment and financial investment. Over the past three decades, employment in health services has been growing rapidly in most countries, often more rapidly than the population. Due to demographic and epidemiological conditions, the demands on health services are expected to increase even further. Today, because of a lack of financial resources, these demands are not always transformed into employment growth in the public health sector, but health services in the private non-profit and for-profit sectors are growing.

**Gender questions**

The health sector is a major employer of women, in some cases up to 80% of all workers in the sector. A wide range of health professions are traditionally female. The share of female nurses is often over 90%. Thus, in a number of countries, addressing gender issues in nursing professions against the background of staff shortage, means exploring possibilities to increasingly interest men to enter the field.

When looking at the hierarchy of employment and the more prestigious and better-paid professions, the situation appears quite different. Women are significantly under-represented in decision-making and managerial positions. Even in female-dominated professions, men are disproportionately well-represented in management.

In general, jobs held mainly by women tend to pay less than those in which men predominate. In the health sector of most countries, women have lower average earnings, even within the same job class. Due to a large variety of patterns of work organization and allowances, it is statistically difficult to establish whether women and men obtain different compensation for the same work.
Different average incomes are frequently the result of gender-specific obstacles to training, promotion and career development. And certain work patterns, such as shift work and frequent overtime, might not be possible for women with family responsibilities and thus will reduce their average income.

Overcoming the obstacles

Gender issues are important for the effectiveness and efficiency of health policy and the delivery of health services. In many cultures, women are the "guardians" of the family's health. Access to women is therefore of great importance for the effectiveness of public health policies. In many cultures, this is only possible through female health professionals.

Obstacles for women to enter and to remain in these professions include long periods of education and lifelong learning, as well as working hours and work organization which may not be compatible with family responsibilities during their professional life cycle. Because of the requirement for continuous, high-quality delivery of health services, these obstacles cannot be easily removed and often lead either to career breaks during periods of intensive family responsibilities, or to their leaving the workforce altogether. To counteract this trend, the health sector must offer women a number of incentives and facilities for them to enter - and to remain – in the health professions, and to enhance their professional careers. Among factors facilitating women's continuous participation in the sector are more flexible (but not precarious) working arrangements, facilities for family care during working hours and tailor-made career development. This flexibility is more difficult to create in the public service, than in the private sector.

What can the ILO do?

- Disseminate information on gender issues specific to the health sector, which differs in this respect from other sectors
- Raise gender issues in a specific chapter of the reports prepared for each meeting dealing with the sector
- Include gender issues in analyzing the various aspects of the work in the health sector, such as employment, remuneration, human resource development, working hours, work organization, safety and health
- Highlight gender issues in regional and national workshops with a specific focus on the respective socioeconomic environment
- Promote the development of gender-disaggregated statistics (i.e., statistics broken down by gender) for health care occupations
- Develop a checklist for monitoring and evaluating the ILO's activities in the health services sector, to ensure gender issues are brought into the mainstream

Emerging trends

Employment creation in the health services is still growing in many countries; however, at a slower pace than in the 1980s. Despite the downsizing of certain job categories and the
restructuring of health services toward more preventive and primary health care, many countries still face a scarcity of qualified personnel. This applies particularly to the nursing professions and general practitioners, professions which have a high share of women. Since an increase in recruitment is limited due to long education periods and difficult working conditions, many countries seek to extend the cycle of professionals staying in this sector and to encourage immigration of professionals from other countries. In general, it can be expected that women have a better chance to be more adequately represented on the career ladder and to be offered better facilities to carry out their professions. And men might be a still untapped source for recruitment into those traditionally female professions which lack qualified personnel.

Homeworkers and the global economy

Removing the mask of invisibility

What is home work? It is the production of goods and/or services under subcontract, by workers who work in a place of their own choosing, often at home, and who are usually paid on a piecework rate. Not under the direct control of the employer, such "homeworkers" can organize their working day, but have no control or say concerning the characteristics or price of what they produce. They are invisible to national statistics, because home work has not been recognized as a distinct category of work in employment and labour statistics, and labour laws have been generally silent or unclear about their rights. Largely made up of low-income and low-skilled women who need to reconcile family responsibilities and domestic chores with income-earning activities, homeworkers receive little and irregular pay, and no social insurance benefits. Since they work in isolation, they are rarely organized into representative associations.

What statistics do exist on homeworkers are patchy and inconsistent at best. It seems, however, that their numbers have been increasing, as a result of the splitting up and relocation of production processes through the establishment of production "chains" operating within and across countries which make use of available cheap female labour. What is new about home work is that it is no longer confined to labour-intensive industries - footwear and the garment industries, for example - as it once was. It is also emerging in capital-intensive industries and in the service sector. Another new feature of home work is the diversity of homeworkers in terms of productivity, educational attainment, work experience, motives for engaging in this type of work, and levels of pay. Interestingly, women tend to predominate in the less-skilled, less-productive and lower-paid jobs.

Obstacles

There are several major obstacles to raising the level of homeworkers to that of other workers:

1. Invisibility and blind policies and programmes: There are no reliable estimates of the number of homeworkers, their geographical location, employment and demographic characteristics. National labour surveys fail to capture home work, because of various conceptual and operational difficulties. It is also hard to distinguish between homeworkers who work for themselves and
those who work for others - in fact, the same worker may doing both at various times. The invisibility of home work may be due to the fact that it involves mainly female labour, traditionally undervalued. The lack of understanding of what home work consists of and the lack of reliable statistics hamper both the design of suitable policies and programmes targeted at homeworkers, and the monitoring of the impact on them of social and economic changes.

2. Lack of social protection: The legal treatment of home work varies significantly within and between regions. In Latin America, the labour codes of many countries contain specific and detailed provisions on this form of employment or recognize most of the labour rights and social insurance benefits for homeworkers which are guaranteed for factory wage earners. Conversely, in Asia, the law tends to be silent about this category of workers. But, in both instances, homeworkers tend to fall outside the realm of conventional social protection schemes. This is due either to the informal arrangements under which this work is carried out or because homeworkers are requested by their employer or intermediary to register themselves as independent workers, so as not to be entitled to labour protection and social security benefits.

3. Lack of organization: Homeworkers are mainly married women at the reproductive age who often do not see themselves as performing a useful economic activity. They work alone or with the help of unpaid family labour. They have little or no contact with other homeworkers and no exposure to the labour movement. The way they obtain work is highly informal, mainly through neighbourhood networks or family and/or ethnic contacts. Their isolation and the nature of the relationship homeworkers often maintain with their employers or intermediaries prevents them from applying pressure for improvements in their pay or in the regularity of their work.

ILO action

The ILO has done much to deal with the question of home work. Since the early 1980s, it has conducted action-oriented research, as well as technical cooperation activities in south Asia and south-east Asia. In 1996, the ILO Conference adopted Convention No. 177 on home work, reinforcing the ILO's commitment to the promotion of the social protection, improved working conditions and enhanced earning capacity of homeworkers. That same year, capitalizing and building upon its previous work, the inter-regional programme, "Homeworkers in the Global Economy" was launched. It has two components: the Asian component, which consolidates the institutional and policy achievements obtained during ten years of work in the region, and the Latin American component, consisting of a series of country studies designed to establish basic information on the extent and forms of home work in that region.

Recommended action

Any strategy targeting homeworkers needs to take into account its gender dimension. It must address the needs of homeworkers in their double capacity of economic agents and family care providers. It must contend with the invisible character of the work and the weak identity of women homeworkers as bona fide workers. This calls for multi-pronged strategies aimed at enhancing job and income opportunities, while improving the welfare of the workers and ensuring better social protection. Thus, five components need to be included in any such strategy:
Strategy components

- Gathering and analyzing data on the magnitude, distribution by economic sector, and characteristics of homework
- Improving the productivity and pay of homeworkers
- Expanding the coverage of social protection through non-conventional forms of social insurance
- Strengthening the bargaining capacity and social status of homeworkers, through organization-building and networking
- Promoting policy and institutional environments which are friendly to this category of workers

Human resources management

Improving the bottom line

Women continue to occupy the lower and middle ranks of organizations, have unequal access to training and promotion, encounter difficulty entering male-dominated professions, and are paid less than men for equal work. This despite the rapid rise in women's labour force participation over the past two decades, constituting approximately half of the workforce in many countries. Furthermore, organizations frequently do not recognize women's specific needs nor value the special assets they bring to the workplace (teamwork, intuitive skills, ability to deal with ambiguity, social and interpersonal skills, participatory management and flexibility).

Why worry about these issues?

Gender equity is good for business. Faced with increasing competition in the global marketplace, an organization's human resources are increasingly recognized as its most precious asset. Competitive advantage, therefore, lies with organizations which maximize the potential of their entire workforce, and address the needs and aspirations of all of their workers, both male and female. Gender equity also affects the bottom line. The different perspectives, attitudes and work styles men and women bring to the workplace foster innovation and creativity.

Obstacles at the workplace

Barriers to gender equity include negative stereotypes about women's abilities and career commitment, poor understanding of the challenges women face at the workplace, lack of advisors for women ("mentoring"), exclusion of women from informal career and communication networks, inflexible work arrangements, and limited opportunities for training and career development.

To address these obstacles, it is vital to recognize that organizational practices are usually not gender neutral, but have largely been designed by men, for men, with organizational cultures which value masculine over feminine work styles and impose a choice of career over family life. To achieve gender equity requires a cultural shift to eliminate the bias and prejudice inherent in the system.
Gender bias in human resources management

Recruitment and selection. Affirmative action programmes have been launched by a number of companies to attract more women. Nevertheless, many companies still conduct traditional recruitment and selection practices which often favour men.

Training and development. Often relegated to the non-core areas of the business, women are not given the same exposure as men to the training and the varied work assignments which will qualify them for promotion and higher levels of pay. Women's greater involvement in part-time work due to family responsibilities is often used as a pretext to deny them access to training.

Performance appraisals. Traditionally, the criteria used to determine effective performance has been largely based on the male, task-oriented approach which is known to place women at a disadvantage. But even in the recently introduced skills- and competency-based systems, which are assumed to benefit women since they take account of a broader range of skills, gender bias may creep in when these skills and competencies are broken down into individual performance criteria.

Incentive systems. Current incentive systems, in particular performance-related pay, skills- and competency-based pay, may tackle the gender inequalities inherent in traditional systems. However, the performance measures and the skills and competencies used to determine remuneration are subject to gender bias.

Work/family balance. Due to the increasing number of working women and dual-career families, many organizations have introduced a number of family-friendly policies. Very often both women and men are reluctant to take advantage of these schemes for fear of jeopardizing their career development. After maternity leave, many women are forced to accept positions that are inferior to their qualifications and often have to leave the career track altogether.

Successful steps have been taken by a number of organizations worldwide to achieve gender impartiality.

How to achieve gender equity:

- **At the enterprise level**
  - Ensure top-level commitment to gender equity
  - Create a unit to initiate culture change and monitor gender issues in the workplace
  - Set measurable goals and specific time-frames for achieving gender equity
  - Integrate these goals into the business plan
  - Hold all managers accountable for gender equity, linking their performance appraisal and rewards to its achievement
  - Implement gender awareness training programmes
  - Carry out employee surveys to obtain regular feedback from employees on policies to achieve gender equity
  - Conduct equal opportunity audits to ensure gender balance at all levels of the organization
Make it an organizational policy to appoint competent women to visible, senior positions in strategic areas of the firm.

**Recruitment and selection**
- Prepare gender-sensitive job descriptions and specifications
- Broaden range of channels to prospect for female candidates
- Ensure that all staff responsible for recruitment is committed to gender equity
- Make sure that women are present on selection panels

**Training and development**
- Identify obstacles to women's career development and make structural changes where appropriate
- Select high-achieving women and provide them with training and career development opportunities
- Rotate women in job assignments so that they can acquire career-building skills
- Encourage the provision of advisors ("mentoring") and networking systems in which women can learn not only from other women, but also from men

**Performance appraisals**
- Outline explicit performance objectives and criteria
- Involve women in determining the appraisal procedures (establishing the criteria, content and structure of the appraisal interview, etc.)
- Make line managers aware that gender equity is a bottom-line issue

**Remuneration**
- Adjust pay rates so that jobs of equal value to the organization are paid equally
- Address gender bias in remuneration schemes
- Introduce a cafeteria style benefit plan throughout the organization

**Work/family balance**
- Introduce flexible working arrangements and ensure that employees who opt for them are not penalized for doing so
- Provide enhanced maternity benefits beyond the minimum statutory requirements
- Ensure that workers who return after maternity/paternity leave, or after extended absence due to family obligations, are able to return to their former positions or to posts of equal rank

**Indigenous and tribal cultures**

"...our models are now being acknowledged as the more viable and sustainable models. We still have to make our communities more democratic and gender-sensitive...we are working hard on this and together we can work for the attainment of a transformed world society".

−Victoria Tauli-Corpus, indigenous advocate

Changes to the cultures of indigenous and tribal people have often been brutal, imposed upon them by dominant cultures and colonial powers who have used their might to isolate or enslave many of these peoples. Their aim? To exploit the lands occupied by these peoples and the
resources attached to these lands. But these cultures often have ancient lifestyles which have endured from time immemorial without much modification. Most of the changes that have occurred took place in the last 500 years; some only in the twentieth century; and they continue today.

Many indigenous cultures have a clear gender division of labour, whether they live by hunting/gathering and fishing (Africa, the Arctic, North America, the Pacific), and pastoralism and agriculture or mining and other forms of resource use (Asia, Africa, the Americas). In industrialized cultures, the gender balance is often tipped in favour of the male. In the indigenous world, however, there may be matriarchy along with their own customs and custom-based laws. While there are many different forms of cultures among these peoples, this gender division often results in a more balanced division of authority between women and men. These characteristics are unknown to most people today, and need further recognition and study to understand how a matriarchy solves environmental, territorial and social problems.

The spiritual world of many indigenous and tribal peoples is also an unexplored area for outsider, one which could shed light on globalization as to questions regarding values, collectivity and collective rights, sharing of resources, giving, songs, dance, music, and relations to death.

How are they helping themselves?

Women are highly visible in the international indigenous movement which has come into existence in the last 20 years. Many are well-educated and competent workers both on national and international platforms. Their work highlights questions of the environment, trade and intellectual property, and indigenous and tribal peoples' national, regional and international rights, and has a significant impact on the international debate.

Regional indigenous women's organizations are found in Africa, Asia, the Americas, the Arctic and the Pacific. They are represented in many national social institutions. Political representation is scarce as yet, and indigenous and tribal women need to encourage and support each other's candidacies. Indigenous women lobbied successfully to have their voices heard at the 1995 Beijing World Conference on Women, where a forty-point "Declaration of Indigenous Women" was issued. In it, governments and other social partners are asked to take particular measures to promote and strengthen national policies and programmes in favour of indigenous women in the areas of human rights, health, education and economic development.

What is being done to help?

The past decade has also witnessed a growing recognition of the distinct interests and concerns of indigenous and tribal women, whose identity, cultural traditions and forms of social organization enhance and strengthen the communities in which they live. They often face barriers both as women and as indigenous and tribal peoples. The significance of the work of these women deserves more recognition, and they should be used as resource persons by Governments, Indigenous Organisations and UN Agencies more often in questions of concern to them.

Their rights have been recognised in the ILO's Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169), the only international Convention in this subject. The ILO Project on the Rights of
Indigenous and Tribal Peoples is now producing a publication on traditional occupations, which describes the role of the sexes in the socioeconomic life of eleven different indigenous and tribal peoples from all regions of the world.

Since 1997, the Project has been involved in micro-level activities in India in partnership with LAYA, an NGO active in tribal issues in Andhra Pradesh, for the empowerment of tribal women displaced by the construction of a hydroelectric dam. It is a capacity-building exercise guided by the interests and concerns of the women, to which the Project has provided resources, organizational experience and support.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aims of the ILO/LAYA programme</th>
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<tr>
<td>Facilitate discussions on problems and issues faced by women with a view toward developing appropriate action strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Increase access to, and control over, land and natural resources, including resource management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study, document and disseminate information on indigenous knowledge systems and practices</td>
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In August, 1999, the Project organized an Eastern African Indigenous Women Conference with the African Indigenous Women's Organization (AIWO). AIWO was established in 1998 to defend and promote the rights of African indigenous women, among many other things.

The purpose of the Conference was to discuss the enhancement of the capacity of African indigenous women to participate in development, and to increase their participation in political, social, and economic structures on the continent. As bearers of traditional knowledge and responsible for training the new generations, they want better access to education, to promote health by avoiding dangerous traditional practices such as genital mutilation, and to promote land ownership. Another important goal emphasized at the Conference was the need for diversifying income-generating alternatives and a better marketing of indigenous women's products.

Achieving the goals of indigenous women will, without doubt, be a long and important struggle, and they will need understanding and support from both the local and international communities, as well as that of their men.

Labour Statistics

Keeping the data honest

What they should do

How well do labour statistics address gender concerns? Sound policy decisions are based on statistics of good quality. Good labour statistics reflect reality as closely as possible. They cover all persons who participate in the labour market, without distinctions of sex, age or social status.
They describe their different types of work situations, including multiple activities, seasonal and occasional work, and work done at home, at sufficiently detailed levels to make these distinctions apparent. They cover those topics which are relevant to describing distinctions and similarities between the various types of workers. And they are disaggregated (i.e., broken down) in such a way - by sex, for example - that they portray the underlying factors which cause such differences to occur.

In particular, good labour statistics enable users to understand and analyze the position and constraints of women workers as compared to men workers, and thus provide a more solid basis for promoting equality between women and men in the labour market.

**What they should not do**

On the other hand, partial labour statistics under-report and misrepresent the contribution of certain groups of workers to the economy. They contribute to inappropriate policies and programmes, and to maintaining a distorted perception of the nature of a country's economy and its human resources. This, in turn, perpetuates a vicious circle of inequality.

**What's wrong?**

While labour statistics have improved substantially over the years, and are certainly useful to identify differences and similarities between men and women in the labour market, they remain incomplete and have limitations in fully addressing gender concerns. This is because the quality of labour statistics depends mainly on the existing methods of data collection which can be used and on the priorities and objectives established before the data are collected.

The different methods of data collection have various limitations, and measurement priorities depend to a large extent on a society's perception of how the labour market functions, which can never be complete. As a result, national labour statistics have generally been successful in identifying and characterizing "core" employment and unemployment situations, which reflect the conventional view of what "work" (workers in full-time regular employment in formal sector enterprises) and "joblessness" (persons who are looking for such jobs) are all about. They have been less successful in identifying and describing other work situations.

Women are often found in these "other" work situations, and may go unnoticed or be inadequately described in labour statistics. Thus, labour statistics tend to under-enumerate and misrepresent women more than men. For example, the defined scope of labour statistics excludes unpaid services for consumption in one's own household. By so doing, the contribution of a vast number of workers to the economy is excluded, most of whom are women. In addition, by virtue of the criteria used in the definitions and characteristics of employed and unemployed populations, as well as the coverage limitations of the data collection methods which can be used, certain groups of workers tend to be excluded from the scope of the statistics. Because the sex composition of these groups generally is not even, where those excluded tend to be women more than men, the usefulness of the resulting statistics for reflecting gender issues is reduced. To improve this situation, international guidelines may be necessary on how to better identify and describe those groups of workers, generally women, who tend to be excluded from statistics.
What's missing?

There are certain topics which are not presently covered in national labour statistics, and for which no international definitions exist, but which are relevant to increasing the understanding of men's and women's positions and interrelationships in the labour market. What are some of these missing statistics?

- **Working time arrangements** would indicate the degree to which men and women work on what is known as "regular full-time" working schedules or on more irregular schedules, such as part-year, part-time employment, annualized working hours and other variable time schedules.
- **Overtime work** would be useful to evaluate whether establishments' responses to market demands affect men and women differently.
- **Absences from work** would help to indicate any differences in the types of absences experienced by men and women, in particular in view of family responsibilities.
- **Occupational diseases** would be relevant, given men's tendency to be more exposed to injuries and women's tendency to be more exposed to diseases.
- **Home work, contingent (or non-permanent) employment, poverty, union participation, access to productive resources and the allocation of benefits among household members**, etc., are other pertinent topics which would be helpful in the context of gender issues.

Finally, relevant disaggregation is also generally wanting in national labour statistics. In order to adequately portray the factors which cause differences between men and women at work, it is important to separate the information by disaggregating it, as a minimum, by sex. But that alone is not enough. To address gender concerns, data on the person's work situation need to be presented; in particular, in the context of their personal and family situation. For example, information on the presence of young children and other household members requiring care would be of interest. In this area also, international guidelines would be most useful.

Migrant Workers

Give them their due

Some 90 million people worldwide are involved in international migration, excluding refugees and asylum seekers, according to an ILO estimate – and approximately half of these are women. The graph below gives approximate data on the proportion of women entering traditional countries of immigration from 1960 to 1992.
It was previously assumed that most women migrated for reasons of family reunification. This assumption is epitomized in The ILO Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Recommendation, 1949 (No. 86), when it refers to a migrant worker's family as being "his wife and minor children". Fifty years later, the same assumption cannot be made, since in many countries the migration of women for employment exceeds that of men by far.

Images of the "typical migrant" persist, however: the migrant worker is perceived as male, and most often, young and economically motivated. Unsurprisingly, this bias leads to the formulation of unrealistic and unresponsive policies which do not take into account the needs of prospective, incoming and returning migrants of both sexes. In establishing immigration policies and legislation, the importance of gender analysis and planning should not be underestimated.

The newly created International Labour Migration Database aims to record the numbers and flows of men and women in member States, and information on their daily living and working conditions, among other information. Disturbing trends in female migration patterns have come to light.
Disturbing trends

- The concentration of women migrants in vulnerable occupations, such as domestic service, "entertainment" (including forced participation in the sex-sector), and nursing, is clear in many parts of the world. The vulnerability of these workers stems from the high degree of subordination which exists between the worker and the employer. This vulnerability is heightened by the fact that these sectors tend to be excluded from national labour legislation and international migration instruments.

- The participation of women in international labour trafficking, often, but not always into various forms of forced labour, is another disturbing trend which commands international attention.

A new mechanism in the field of international labour migration, known as "pattern and practice studies", approved by the Governing Body of the ILO at its 265th session in 1996, gives the ILO an opportunity to address cases where female migrants are repeatedly exposed to serious and widespread violation of their rights. This mechanism provides a means of action to resolve cases of persistent and widespread abuse of migrant workers. It is triggered when a constituent informs the ILO of abuse of migrant workers falling outside Convention-based procedures. Governments themselves can also initiate a pattern and practice study in their own countries if they feel that there are problems to which the ILO could respond.

With regard to international labour trafficking, the Tripartite Meeting of Experts on Future ILO Activities in the Field of Migration, adopted a set of guidelines on special protective measures for migrant workers recruited by private agents. These guidelines follow the principles enumerated in the Migration for Employment (Revised) Convention, 1949 (No. 97), and the Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143). But the guidelines go beyond those Conventions by encouraging both those states which send migrants and those which receive them to provide adequate sanctions against abuses or malpractices regarding migrants; e.g., "forcing the migrant worker, upon arrival in the receiving country, to accept a contract of employment with conditions inferior to those contained in the contract which he or she signed prior to departure".

While the scale of women's participation in migration patterns has not changed in recent years, the nature of their participation has. Women are more likely to migrate spontaneously and independently in search of employment. Various protective measures have been taken at the international, regional and national levels to redress some of the abuses of which female migrants are victims. Still, qualitative and quantitative data on the impact of the 'feminization' of migration on the labour market of home and host countries has not yet been tackled. As a result, both labour market and migration policies often remain inappropriate and unresponsive - a discrepancy which the ILO is in a unique position to redress.
**Occupational Safety and Health**

**Training the trainers**

**An "invisible" glass ceiling**

Women are seriously missing out by non-participation in certain activities which have traditionally been "male" activities. Among many such are certain trade union endeavours in which women could and should take a far more active role, such as in training. By so doing, they increase their skills - and thus their self-confidence - their visibility, and the perception of their value to the rank-and-file. Thereby also, they enhance their ability to break through the glass ceiling - one often ignored because of the more visible corporate glass ceiling - of trade unionism. Equally important, it also prepares them to take on other roles outside of the union.

Women are often absent from certain trade union activities, reluctant to get involved because they see these as areas where technical skills and expertise are critical, making them question their competence. For real change to take place, union leaders need to demystify technical areas, empower workers, and encourage their women's committees to address problems specific to women in the workplace.

**Train-the-trainers**

Training women workers as instructors in trade unions is one such example where some success has been noted. Train-the-trainer workshops for women workers can accomplish powerful goals, helping women to understand the important role they can play in becoming instructors for their unions, and realize their potential to stimulate positive change. Such courses provide a supportive classroom environment whereby women workers feel empowered and able to carry out new roles and newly developed skills. Equally important, it prepares the women for taking on other roles both within and outside of the union.

But such training is different from training mixed-gender groups and deserves special attention. It requires: 1 spoonful of training methodology, 1 spoonful of technical skills and information, and 10 spoonfuls of confidence-building. Through the use of empowerment training techniques, workers can relate their own life experiences to what is being discussed and practiced both in the classroom and in the workplace. By stimulating self-reflection, trainees understand better how workplace and environmental problems affect them, and what they can do to address them. The process also provokes a greater understanding of how to work effectively with others to stimulate awareness of workplace and environmental issues.

**It's not easy**

Building a strong sense of solidarity among a group of women trainees takes time. Workshop facilitators play an important role in nurturing the development of group cohesion, helping trainees unleash the ability to develop their technical knowledge, to acquire new skills related to the workplace, to develop group work-skills, to learn about and practice using new training philosophies, and to apply those training techniques to empower other workers.
But even those women workers who have undergone such training still face many hardships, such as difficulty advancing in the rank-and-file of a trade union, in gaining support from male leadership to organize training courses and in ensuring that other women participate. They encounter jealousy for demonstrating particular competencies and may even have obstacles placed before them just because they are women. Addressing technical subjects to a group of male workers can be particularly intimidating. In the classroom, women workers benefit from practicing their roles as trainers in front of a highly supportive group. Seeing and hearing each other tackle technical issues is tremendously effective in building the self-confidence needed to face a male or mixed group of workers.

And worth the effort

But it's worth the effort: "I don't want my daughter to grow up feeling inadequate and uneducated like I have. I want her to feel in control of her life. This is why I wanted to gain these new skills and pursue this direction", a statement revealing the motivation behind one Filipina trade unionist's desire to become an Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) instructor. A stirring success story is that of Kalpana, an Indian woman working in Bombay.

Kalpana

"I was zero when I came to the first workshop", said Kalpana, a computer operator in the port of Bombay, who attended two ILO OSH train-the-trainer workshops. The first workshop taught 16 women participatory/empowerment training techniques and technical material. Ten months later the second workshop reinforced their mastery of that material. The first workshop gave Kalpana - who previously had never taught or organized workers - the self-confidence to organize numerous OSH workshops for her union. All of the other women did the same. Since the second workshop, Kalpana was elected to the Women's Steering Committee of the International Transport Federation. She organizes and teaches trade union workshops, participated in the XIV World Congress on OSH in Spain, attended a three-week international OSH trade union training course in Israel, organized contract workers seeking wage revision, speaks publicly about AIDS, and gave a speech on women's leadership in trade unions at the World Centenary Congress of the International Transport Workers' Federation in London - in front of 3,000 delegates from 120 countries, with 84 speakers, among whom only four were women.

Kalpana and the others transformed themselves into OSH motivators/transmitters and were catalysts in a "multiplier effect" - one group like this can train literally thousands of workers. Thanks to the successes of these Indian women workers, the same opportunity was provided to women trade unionists in the Philippines.

The success illustrated here, and others, have provided the inspiration for women to move into additional arenas also. As part of a national programme of advocacy and action through OSH training and education in Brazil, women widowed by occupational accidents will be trained to be transmitters and motivators of a culture of safety on construction sites. Who could convey better to workers the importance of OSH than a woman who has lost her husband to a work-related accident? Once widowed, these women quickly become marginalized, often turning to drugs and
prostitution. This training is a way to provide some of them with a new future. Some will also participate as instructors in literacy training through OSH, and be involved in training seminars where prevention, rehabilitation, return-to-work policies and access to treatment services are discussed.

Thus, such women have not only proven their worth as trainers, but it has allowed them to overcome some of their former problems in the workplace. These examples also show how the experiences and successes of one group of women workers can serve as models for similar groups of women in other parts of the world, enhancing their value in the labour market.

**Occupational sex segregation**

**Inefficiency, rigidity and discrimination**

The extent to which labour markets in the world are segregated based on a worker's sex is startling. Approximately 60% of non-agricultural workers in the world are in an occupation where at least 80% of the workers are either women or men, according to a recent ILO book by Richard Anker. This means that a majority of workers in the world work in what can legitimately be regarded as "female" or "male" occupations.

**The problem**

This occupational segregation by sex is an important source of labour market inefficiency and rigidity. It represents exclusion and discrimination as well as a wasteful use of human resources, since many of the best qualified and most appropriate persons for an occupation may effectively be excluded because of their sex. It is clearly a major drag on the economy, and negatively affects the international competitiveness of certain countries. Labour market discrimination and inequality between men and women also have important negative effects on future generations. Since education and training decisions of parents and young people are based in part on labour market opportunities, occupational segregation and labour market discrimination negatively affect the amount and type of education and training girls and women receive. This, in turn, helps to perpetuate inequalities between men and women in the labour market as well as in their homes.

Occupational segregation by sex is to a large extent a women's issue, since it is more detrimental for them than for men. To begin with, women are employed in a narrower range of occupations than men. According to Anker's book, male-dominated non-agricultural occupations are on average seven times as numerous as female-dominated occupations. Furthermore, "female" occupations are generally less attractive, with their tendency toward lower pay, lower status and fewer advancement possibilities. One frequently mentioned example of the restricted career path of women is the famous "glass ceiling" preventing women from occupying the higher levels of management, demonstrated by the fact that almost 90% of managers, high-level administrators and legislative officials in the world are men.

But it is important to note that occupational sex segregation is becoming of increasing concern to men as well. In recent years, job growth has generally favoured typical "female" occupations.
(such as those in the service sector) rather than typical "male" jobs (such as those in the manufacturing sector).

The causes

A number of theories have been put forward to explain why there is so much sex segregation in occupations around the world. Some economists stress human capital, and the fact that women tend to have fewer and less relevant years of education and labour market experience as compared to men. As a result, women have different qualifications and interests regarding the types of occupations which suit them. Other economists stress the existence of segmented labour markets and how women face greater competition for jobs as compared to men, since women are "crowded" into a smaller set of occupations. These theories partly explain occupational segregation by sex.

Feminist and gender theories on this question are primarily concerned with non-labour market variables. They stress that women's disadvantaged position in the labour market is caused by patriarchy, women's subordinate position in society and the responsibilities they have for housework and child care. Data in Anker's book supports the feminist view, since typical stereotypes in society regarding women's supposed abilities (such as caring nature, greater manual dexterity) closely correspond to the characteristics of typical "female" occupations (e.g., nurse and nanny, seamstress and typist, cashier and bookkeeper, etc.). Similarly, negative stereotypes of women in society (such as less physical strength, supposed disinclination to supervise others, etc.) correspond closely to occupations where women tend to be absent (e.g., construction worker, manager and supervisor, etc.).

Statistical considerations

When presenting or interpreting statistics on occupational segregation by sex, it is important to take into consideration the details of the occupational data being analyzed, since the level of occupational segregation by sex observed is very sensitive to the occupational classification being used. For example, according to Anker, the "index of dissimilarity" (the most commonly used inequality index) in non-agricultural occupations varies on average from 0.25 to 0.66, in direct relation to the disaggregation of the data used in the calculation. And whereas women tend to be reasonably well represented among professionals (using an aggregated one-digit occupational classification), typical two-digit data show that most women professionals are either teachers or in the medical, dental and veterinary occupations. Finer data classifications reveal further segregation, since most women medical, dental and veterinary workers are nurses, and among teachers pre-primary and primary school teachers are much more likely to be feminized occupations as compared to secondary school and university teachers.

World levels and trends

It is important to note that there are large variations in the world in levels and trends in occupational segregation by sex. The Asia and Pacific region has the lowest average level, and the Middle East and North Africa region has the highest. Segregation levels are also relatively high in other developing countries, whereas levels in OECD and European transition economy countries tend to have rather average levels for the world. Interestingly, the high rates of
occupational segregation by sex found in the world used to be much higher; there is convincing evidence that levels have fallen since 1970. According to Anker's book, there was an 11 percentage point decrease from 1970 to 1990 in the proportion of the non-agricultural labour force in gender-dominated occupations. This dramatic improvement, however, did not occur in all regions of the world. There was little or no improvement in large east Asian countries, and in some Middle East and North African, European OECD and transition economy countries.

**The ILO's role**

Occupational sex segregation has taken on increased importance within ILO and the international community in recent years with the ratification of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, since "the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation" is part of one of the four core subject areas covered in this Declaration. It is clear that occupational sex segregation and the existence of separate segmented labour markets for men and women are important manifestations of this discrimination. Therefore, it will be incumbent on the ILO in the future to assist member States to increase labour market opportunities and choices - for men and women alike - by reducing occupational segregation by sex. Since a majority of workers in the world work in a gender-dominated occupation, it is clear that there is much progress to be made.

The downward trend in occupational sex segregation in much of the world is a positive sign. It is hoped that it will not only continue, but will spread throughout the world as well.

**Part-time work**

**A bridge or a trap?**

Is part-time work a "bridge" or a "trap" in terms of labour market participation. Does it represents a marginalized form of cheap labour and precarious employment, or does it enables workers to enter paid employment or maintain continuous employment? These questions are serious crucial issues, since the overwhelming majority of part-time workers around the world are women.

The growth in part-time work has been a significant feature of recent changes in the labour market of industrialized countries, where women make up between 65% and 90% of all part-time workers. The main driving forces behind this increase in part-time work have been women's increased labour market participation, the expansion of the service sector, and the desire for flexibility among employers. In developing countries women working part-time are mostly found in the informal sector and among homeworkers.

Part-time work among women is usually triggered by motherhood, while among men it is more likely to occur at the point of labour market entry or exit. Women may choose to embrace part-time work because of flexible hours, greater compatibility with family responsibilities - of which they continue to assume the greater share - or relatively easier labour market access, but for a number of women the lack of better alternatives makes it compulsory.
Women's involvement in paid work, and particularly the extent to which motherhood involves a shift into part-time work, varies markedly between countries. Differences in social structures play a central role in accounting for international variations in behaviour regarding part-time work. The gender division of labour within the home makes women more available for part-time work than men, but state policies also structure the labour supply plans and behaviour. Therefore, the extent of part-time work depends not only on household circumstances, but also on the behaviour of enterprises, labour market policies and regulation as well as the wider welfare state regimes.

There are considerable differences between countries in the extent and form of part-time work and in the employment conditions of part-time workers. It has been argued that it is not part-time work per se which constitutes a secondary form of employment, but the accumulation of disadvantages associated with remaining in this type of employment over long periods. Missing out on training and promotion pushes these workers into a peripheral labour market in terms of qualifications and income, or lower lifetime accumulation of pension entitlements. The precarious nature of part-time employment is linked to job security and social security entitlements.

The impact of part-time work cannot be disentangled from the influence of gender and its relation to full-time employment. In some sectors, the prevalence of part-time work helps to maintain the economic subordination of women and reinforces social norms which may affect women workers, both full-time and part-time. In many countries, part-time workers are considered as casual participants in the labour market and not as prime or independent income earners. They have restricted rights to unemployment benefits, pensions and sick pay, particularly when they fail to meet earnings or hours eligibility criteria, and when combining work with other activities such as education and caring for family members. Exemption from social protection payments may increase the immediate cash income of part-time workers at the expense of losing benefit entitlements. This is a growing concern in view of the change in family structures, the increase in female-headed households and the growth in the number of single-parent families.

The ILO defines a part-time worker as "an employed person whose normal hours of work are less than normal hours of work of comparable full-time workers". But part-time work not only involves fewer hours, lower hourly rates and lower weekly remuneration than full-time work, it can also constitute a different form of employment, organized on different principles, and on different terms and conditions from full-time jobs, with less employment protection rights. The advantages which employers draw from part-time work lie primarily in the opportunities to cut out unnecessary labour hours or to reduce the use of expensive overtime labour. Policies designed to promote part-time work by lowering its cost below that of full-time employment are likely to have the perverse effect of increasing the proportion of involuntary part-time workers; i.e., underemployment, with adverse consequences, both social - especially for women and disadvantaged workers - and economic, by depressing demand, growth and employment.

In industrialized countries, some efforts have been made to reduce the gap between the two categories of workers. However, attempts to incorporate part-time workers into the regulatory system has resulted in a leveling down process; i.e., a deterioration in the employment conditions of their full-time fellow workers. This tendency has been reinforced by the simultaneous move towards increased individualization in the terms and conditions of employment.
The growing attention paid to part-time work is reflected at the international level. In 1994 the International Labour Conference adopted the Part-Time Convention (No. 175) and Recommendation (No. 182). While acknowledging the importance of productive and freely chosen employment for all workers, the economic importance of part-time work, and the need for employment policies to take into account the role of part-time work in facilitating additional employment opportunities, those international instruments address the need to ensure protection for part-time workers in the areas of access to employment, working conditions and social security. Convention 175 establishes minimum standards for part-time employment, based on the two principles of proportionality and non-discrimination.

**Productivity**

*Giving all workers an opportunity to contribute their full potential*

Gender discrimination in the workplace can have a negative effect on productivity. Sources of discrimination and ways to improve fairness of treatment are not always easy to identify, but action to eliminate unfairness based on gender and to improve the opportunities offered to women can make a difference to an organization's efficiency.

**Forms of discrimination**

Much discrimination is not deliberate and simply arises from implicit, traditional assumptions about men and women, and what certain jobs require.

Direct discrimination involves a preference for men over equally qualified women for given positions, and offering women less development opportunities. Evaluation is always subjective to some extent, and equivalent qualifications may be regarded less favourably for women than for men. Assumptions about women being less ambitious, less able to speak in public, less able to exercise authority, etc., may be built into the assignments given to women. The same characteristics may also be assessed differently in women and in men. For example, what is regarded as leadership in a man may be seen as a domineering attitude in a woman, and reserve may be interpreted as wisdom in a man but as shyness in a woman.

Indirect discrimination occurs when procedures and criteria for selection, promotion, access to benefits, etc., are such that the majority of women end up being excluded even though they were not intended to be. For example, employees may be recruited through networks of professional acquaintances so that for the most part only men will be contacted for a given position. Only employees on long-term or full-time contracts may be eligible for benefits, etc. Indirect discrimination may also occur when social patterns of behaviour which are more often found among men than among women are considered the right way to do things.

**How can discrimination affect productivity?**
Pay: To many people, pay is a measure of fairness and a measure of the value their employer puts on their work. Women who are paid less than men with similar qualifications are likely to feel less motivated and may not stay with their employer as long.

Choosing the best person for the job: Discrimination, whether direct or indirect, means that hiring and promotions are based on a restricted group of potential applicants. Removing discrimination implies selecting from a larger pool of talent, with a better chance of finding the best person for the job. In many cases, this may require more open and systematic procedures, which can further improve the selection process.

Encouraging people to contribute to their full potential: Good work often involves initiative and creativity, even in carrying out apparently simple tasks. Many human resource practices are designed to encourage employees to do good work by providing them with opportunities to exercise initiative and creativity, and with incentives to do so. For example, enterprises may set up problem-solving groups or quality circles and offer employee share-ownership plans or incentive pay schemes. However, some of these schemes have been less than successful because management involved women less than men in participatory processes. Teams were formed and the team leaders appointed were men, or it was not thought necessary to include certain units or certain skill groups in consultative processes, and those happened to be primarily female. Women may also work in jobs which are not covered by incentive pay schemes, whether because they are lower down in the organization or because they do not meet eligibility criteria based on hours, duration of contract or length of service.

Discrimination-related stress: Feeling underutilized, unfairly treated or undervalued creates stress, and perceptions of discrimination have been associated with extra stress among discriminated groups. Discriminatory environments also foster sexual harassment, with the attendant ill effects on health, absenteeism and resignations among victims.

By underutilising their employees' skills and exposing a share of their workforce to demoralisation and stressful harassment, discriminatory workplaces undermine their potential efficiency and productivity. Furthermore, discriminatory organizations may be exposed to costly lawsuits in an increasing number of countries. Gender-conscious enterprises may also be better able to respond to changing markets, as shown by the recent example of sports equipment manufacturers' development of products adapted to women's anatomy.

What can be done?
Management of public and private sector workplaces have a crucial role in improving fairness of treatment by actively implementing comprehensive equal opportunities measures in their organizations. Over two decades of experience in several countries have shown a number of practices to be effective in correcting and preventing discrimination in the workplace. Available evidence suggests fair treatment policies have been associated with better performance.

### Practices to improve fairness of treatment in the workplace

Examples of effective practices include:

- Training employees in equal-opportunity issues
- Monitoring the composition of the workforce at all levels
- Setting quantitative objectives for improving the gender balance at all levels
- Reviewing hiring and promotion procedures
- Reviewing eligibility criteria for benefits
- Ensuring that women sit on all evaluation committees
- Requiring all "short lists" for hiring and promotion to include female applicants
- Setting up hotlines and formal complaint procedures for sexual harassment
- etc.

In all cases, making management accountable for the implementation of these policies has been found especially important to their success.

### Public services

#### Employment trends and career obstacles for women

About 450 million people are employed worldwide in the public sector, according to the latest ILO estimates, which is on average 30% of total employment. If this number, at least 200 million are working in public administration. Although the total bill for wages of these public service personnel constitutes a major part of public expenditure - and is often the target for downsizing - reducing public services will achieve little in terms of quality and effectiveness, if attention is not paid to the development of human resources. Gender issues play a vital role in these reform processes because women and men alike are both public service personnel and are users or clients of public services.

#### The issues

Gender issues in the public service sector arise from differences in men's and women's share in jobs, their position in the hierarchical structure, career advancement, contractual arrangements and pay. All these aspects are interrelated. In most countries the public sector is the largest employer of women and as such provides important job opportunities for them. In public services
such as health and education, women constitute the majority of the workforce. In several countries this is also true for public administration. On the other hand, the share of jobs going to women in public utilities such as water, electricity and gas is low in most countries, ranging from 1% to 2%.

Women tend to occupy the less-skilled, lower-paid and lower-level jobs. Within public administration, but also in public utilities, most women work in clerical jobs. Few women reach middle-management level and even less have top-management positions. For many years, promotion in the public service has depended mainly on seniority, to the detriment of women with family responsibilities. They often take career breaks to raise their children and may, therefore, not attain the same seniority as men. Since the public service was the first sector in a number of countries to introduce the same possibility for men to take breaks for family reasons, similar patterns may also apply to them - but to a much lesser extent.

Obstacles to women's careers in public services are not only limited to the promotion system. Recruitment procedures, criteria for selection and performance appraisals are also gender-biased. In-service training often does not correspond to women's needs and is not sufficiently accessible to them. Moreover, since women's general educational level is often low in many countries, further training is needed and yet is not readily available; in particular, to part-time and temporary workers, the majority of whom are women.

In countries where public service pay is not competitive with that of the private sector, the number of women reaching management positions is often higher. Nevertheless, women's pay in general is often less than that of their male colleagues, particularly in services where allowances (e.g. in the health services) and discretionary parts of the salary play an important role.

**Addressing the issues**

Addressing public service gender issues contributes significantly to policies to improve the quality and efficiency of the services provided, and makes them more client-sensitive. These policies usually lead to restructuring and decentralization to bring them closer to the users. An analysis shows that many, if not most, public services have a considerable proportion of female users and clients. Gender balance among employees who provide and manage these services could ensure a more effective response to their demands.

Legislation on equal opportunity and treatment exists in most countries. Many have removed gender-biased laws and have created services to monitor the implementation of the new legislation and ensure good practice. The obstacles to women's advancement in the public service lie mainly in rigid career ladders and little flexibility in civil service codes concerning working hours and work organization adapted to the needs of workers with family responsibilities. Additionally, because of their often lower educational levels and limited opportunities for training, women are at a disadvantage because further training is required in the restructuring process taking place in many countries.

Policy papers, affirmative action plans, and other support schemes, such as quotas have been introduced to improve women's positions in the employment structure of public services. As the largest employer in most countries, the state, traditionally considered a model for good personnel
management practices through such measures, also aims to convince private employers of the usefulness of addressing gender issues in their personnel management. The large variety of possible measures is considerable and is best elaborated in dialogue with those concerned.

**Emerging trends**

Downsizing and restructuring of the public services characterizes the situation of the public sector in many countries of the world. This has lead to dramatic situations for the workforce of this sector, including retrenchment and late or non-payment of salaries. Since women are predominantly concentrated in lower-skilled and lower-paid jobs, they are frequently the group most affected by redeployment or retrenchment.

To improve the efficiency of public services, more flexibility in the terms of employment and work organization must be introduced. This might favour women's needs and those of workers with family responsibilities in general. However, flexibility introduced at the expense of equal opportunity and treatment can hamper women's career prospects in the case of part-time and temporary workers. Performance-related pay is often considered to be one means of achieving quality and client-driven services, the target of public service reforms all over the world. Developments in the public service sector still remain to be analyzed in view of their gender impact.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What can the ILO do?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Analyze gender differences in public services and develop a plan of action to address gender inequality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Disseminate information on gender issues in public services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Include gender issues in analyzing the various aspects of work in public services, such as employment practices, remuneration, human resource development, working hours, work organization, safety and health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Highlight gender issues in regional and national workshops on public services with a specific focus on the socioeconomic context</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborate with training institutions for public services to include gender issues into their programmes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promote the development of sex-disaggregated statistics (i.e., statistics broken down by sex) of the workforce of public services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Develop a checklist for monitoring and evaluating to ensure that gender issues are a priority concern in ILO's activities in public services</td>
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Retirement

A labour market in transition

The problem

Working longer and retiring later while paying higher contributions for reduced pensions is a possible near-future scenario. With fertility declining and life expectancy increasing, the world's population is aging much faster than previously, leading to a significantly larger population of pension-age people. This, in turn, will most likely lead to a deficit in available funds for pension payments...Unless a solution is foreseen now.

These developments imply other direct consequences for the labour market also. As the supply of young entrants shrinks, the older workforce will have to remain in the labour market longer to fill all the jobs. Thus, the viability of early retirement policies is now in doubt. Instead of a reduced labour supply, prolonging working life will increase it. This is a subject high on the political agenda and of much concern. Nevertheless, the trend toward an aging workforce will also have to be accompanied by a change of attitude towards the older workers - women in particular - and active rather than passive policies for boosting their training, productivity and decency of work.

The issues

Women's transition to retirement differs from that of men because of their different place in the labour market. Employment rates for older women are still lower than for older men, although the rates for men have substantially declined due to early retirement policies. On the other hand, rates for younger women have increased substantially. Because of their family responsibilities, women tend to have more breaks in their professional careers. They are also largely employed in the service sector, with a high proportion of part-time jobs and other forms of flexible employment. Therefore, access to pensions, usually based on full-time, continuous work, is more difficult for them.

Pension levels are also lower for women than for men, and they are under-represented in early retirement schemes. However, in some countries the statutory age of entitlement is still lower for women than for men. But reforms are underway in others, whose aim is to equalize pension ages between the sexes. However, far-reaching changes still need to take place in their pension provisions in order to achieve equal pension rights for men and women.

In some countries women receive preferential treatment in terms of the age at which they qualify for a state pension. Historically, the retirement pension was awarded on a family basis; the father was normally the family breadwinner, while the mother cared for the home and family. Why did women obtain pensions at a lower retirement age? Perhaps to compensate them for the years they spent outside the labour force caring for children. It may also be based on "traditional" thinking that older women are physically weaker than older men. It may also be a way to compensate women, since in earlier generations they derived less satisfaction from employment because of the kinds of jobs they had access to. Today, however, women are ever more eager to work and are occupying increasingly attractive jobs. Thus, it seems that there is no longer a rationale behind different retirement ages for men and women.
In the past, women's participation in early retirement schemes has been low in relation to their share of total employment. During the 1970s, the retirement age was generally 60. Early retirement programmes were targeted at declining manufacturing industries, whose work forces were predominately male. Thus, even when age conditions did not prevent women from taking early retirement under government schemes, the targeting of manufacturing made it harder for women to avail themselves of such schemes.

In some countries, equalization has been achieved mainly by raising women's pension age to that of men. However, women still encounter difficulties in accessing pension schemes because, as noted previously, their paid and unpaid work patterns do not conform to that of long-term, continuous participation in paid work on which entitlement to those schemes is based.

A common rule in both state- or employer-sponsored national schemes and employer-sponsored company schemes is the requirement of a minimum period of membership before rights are acquired. This places women at a disadvantage, as can the reference salary on which pension benefits are based. For example, if a woman ends her career in a part-time job and her salary in her last job is the one used as a pension reference, she will have severely reduced pension benefits.

In some countries there are rules which compensate women for the difficulties they encounter in gaining access to adequate pension provisions. Some focus on sex or marital status, or a combination of the two. Provisions falling within this category include different pension ages, survivors' benefits, dependency allowances and derived rights. Other rules make special provision for those providing care for others.

The advantage of such rules within a pension system is that they enable women (and men) without a history of full-time, high-paid work to secure an adequate retirement pension income. However, compensation for care provision does not protect the pension position of workers (women and men) engaged in part-time, non-continuous, low-paid work. The expansion of flexible forms of employment makes it likely that the numbers of such workers will increase rather than decrease in future years, thereby increasing the number of people with insecure or inadequate pension rights.

**What can be done?**

Reversing the trend toward early retirement seems, on the one hand, to be a rational answer to the problem of aging. On the other hand, restricting access to early retirement, but continuing present lay-off policies in the wake of globalization and associated mergers, acquisitions and restructuring, might simply result in more unemployment at the end of a working life.
**Policy recommendations**

- Companies should ensure adequate training for their older workers, adjusted to their particular needs
- Flexible working-time and team work may also address the needs for both productivity and decent work
- Employers should be convinced that it is in their interest to maintain their older workers in their jobs
- Governments should provide incentives to firms which maintain older workers and provide them with training
- Carefully designed, progressive retirement systems should be devised which allow employees to work part-time in their last working years without losing their full pension entitlements
- Part-time workers who have had difficult working conditions or those with long contribution periods should not be excluded from the benefits of retiring early

**Sexual Harassment**

**A question of power relations**

Emotional stress, humiliation, anxiety, depression, anger, powerlessness, fatigue, physical illness - these are some of the potentially serious effects suffered by victims of sexual harassment. Tension in the workplace, inefficient team work and collaboration, lowered work performance, absenteeism, decreased productivity - these are some of its effects on the enterprise.

**What is it?**

Although definitions of sexual harassment in various laws, codes, policies, court decisions and collective agreements may differ in some details, most definitions contain the same key elements:

- Conduct of a sexual nature and other conduct based on sex affecting the dignity of women and men, which is unwelcome, unreasonable, and offensive to the recipient

- Where a person's rejection of, or submission to, such conduct is used explicitly or implicitly as a basis for a decision which affects that person's job (access to vocational training or employment, continued employment, promotion, salary or any other employment decisions), and

- Conduct which creates an intimidating, hostile or humiliating working environment for the recipient
Given its name in the 1970s in the United States as a concept, and made actionable under discrimination law, the issue of sexual harassment has gradually emerged as a recognized phenomenon throughout the world, perceived as a problem of significant magnitude.

Sexual harassment is, above all, a manifestation of power relations - women are much more likely to be victims of sexual harassment precisely because they lack power, are in more vulnerable and insecure positions, lack self confidence, or have been socialized to suffer in silence. Women are also subject to such conduct when they are seen to be competing for power.

Sexual harassment is a form of gender discrimination from both a legal and conceptual perspective. While men may be subjected to sexual harassment, the majority of victims are women. The problem relates to the roles which are attributed to men and women in social and economic life, which, in turn, directly or indirectly, affects women's position in the labour market.

Sexual harassment comes in many forms. One of the most notorious is quid pro quo harassment. This term is used to describe the situation where an employee is forced to choose between acceding to sexual demands or losing job benefits. Because "quid pro quo" harassment can only be committed by someone with the power to give or take away an employment benefit, this form of sexual harassment consists of an abuse of authority by the employer (or by the employer's agent to whom authority over terms and conditions is delegated). Such sexual blackmail is widely regarded as particularly reprehensible, since it represents a breach of trust and an abuse of power. Other forms may produce what is known as a hostile work environment. Examples of this type of conduct includes verbal and non-verbal sexually offensive behaviour exhibited by colleagues (or even customers).

But, in any form, the conduct in question has to be unwelcome or unwanted by the person on the receiving end. A recent ILO survey of company policies on sexual harassment revealed this to be the centerpiece of their policies. This is what distinguishes it from friendly behaviour which is welcome and mutual. It is not the intent of the person guilty of harassing behaviour which is the determining factor; it is the recipient of such behaviour who determines whether conduct of a sexual nature is welcome or not.

But, does it really exist?

The ILO's experience indicates that even when the phenomenon in a particular society is denied by some, its existence is equally positively asserted by those who suffer from it, indicating that lack of awareness of its existence does not necessarily mean that it is not present. Moreover, there is a growing body of empirical research, including case law, documenting the incidence of sexual harassment at work. Surveys carried out in recent years in many countries all reveal that sexual harassment does indeed exist in the workplace in both developing and industrialized countries.

What are its consequences?

For employees, the consequences of sexual harassment for the victim can be devastating. In addition to the damaging physical and psychological effects mentioned previously, the victim may lose her/his job or job-related experiences such as training, or feel that the only solution is to
resign. Sexual harassment leads to frustration, loss of self-esteem, absenteeism and decreased productivity.

*For enterprises,* in addition to the negative effects mentioned previously, sexual harassment can even be the cause behind valuable employees quitting or losing their jobs when they had otherwise demonstrated good performance. Allowing a climate of tolerance of sexual harassment leaves the enterprise with a poor image, assuming victims are complaining and making their situations public. Furthermore, in a growing number of countries where court action may successfully result in damages and fines, financial risks are increasing.

*The consequences for society* as a whole are that sexual harassment impedes the achievement of equality, it condones sexual violence and has detrimental effects on the efficiency of enterprises, hindering productivity and development.

**What's being done about it?**

Sexual harassment is not only a women's issue; it is a human rights issue, a labour issue and a human resource management issue. It's victims can be workers in the public service, in large and small enterprises, in services and shops, on plantations and farms, and entrepreneurs and traders in marketplaces.

As far back as 1985, the International Labour Conference recognized that sexual harassment in the workplace is detrimental to employees' working conditions and to their employment and promotion prospects, and it called for the inclusion of measures to combat and prevent it in policies for the advancement of equality. Since then the ILO has pointed to sexual harassment as a violation of fundamental rights of workers, declaring that it constitutes a problem of safety and health, a problem of discrimination, an unacceptable working condition and a form of violence (primarily against women). What has been done then to combat it?

*At the international level,* sexual harassment is not the subject of any binding international Convention. However, the relevant supervisory bodies of the ILO and the United Nations have found that it is covered as a form of sex-based discrimination. An ILO Committee of Experts has addressed sexual harassment under the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). The UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women has addressed the issue under the application of the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and has adopted General Recommendation No.19 on violence against women, which expressly defines sexual harassment and calls on states to take measures to protect women from this phenomenon. The Organization of American States has adopted a Convention on Violence against Women which contains similar measures. The only international standard so far adopted which prohibits this practice directly is Article 20 of the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169).

*At the national level,* a significant number of countries (approximately 40) have adopted some form of legislation which covers sexual harassment. Many of them are reviewing draft Acts. In many, sexual harassment has been defined by implication as an activity which is a violation of a statute covering a subject other than sexual harassment, such as human rights, unfair dismissal, contract law, tort law, or criminal behaviour.
The most effective action addresses all forms of sexual harassment. Restricting a prohibition on sexual harassment only to sexual blackmail by employers or their agents is not enough. First of all, it excludes unacceptable conduct between colleagues. Yet harassment by a colleague can have physical, emotional and psychological consequences - which are as damaging as those of harassment by a superior - through the creation of a hostile working environment. Second, where the law limits its definition of sexual harassment to sexual blackmail, the effect is that it is not the harassment per se which is regarded as unlawful, but rather that she (or he) lost a promotion or a pay raise, or was dismissed, because of her (or his) reaction to the harassment. Such a situation effectively permits a worker to be sexually harassed with impunity, provided that no tangible action was taken against him or her in response to resistance.

**Other measures**

To handle complaints of sexual harassment, court decisions have stressed the need for due process of the victim and the accused to be honoured. Many claims of sexual harassment have failed or been overturned due to inadequate handling of the complaints. There is a range of potential remedies for sexual harassment under civil, criminal, and worker compensation law. However, it should be kept in mind that the main aim of most victims of sexual harassment is not to sue their employer for damages, but to ensure that the offensive behaviour stops, that it should not recur and that they should be protected against retaliation for having brought a complaint.

**Recommended policies and procedures**

ILO research indicates that sexual harassment policies and procedures should include four main components: a policy statement, a complaints procedure adapted to sexual harassment which maintains confidentiality, progressive disciplinary rules, and a training and communication strategy. Protection against retaliation must also be a key element of any complaint procedure.

In addition to legislation, there has been an increase in codes of conduct, guidance material, policy statements, and public awareness programmes addressing the issue. Training programmes on sexual harassment have been organized by government agencies, employers' organizations, non-governmental organizations and independent consultancy firms. Collective bargaining has been used as a means of tackling sexual harassment in some countries, and is seen as a potentially effective avenue to prevent and prohibit it. Some employers' organizations have advised their affiliates of current laws, and have recommended that employers formulate policy statements, train managerial and supervisory staff, establish complaints procedures and provide information to all employees. Trade unions in a number of countries have published brochures explaining what sexual harassment is and what can be done about it. Some unions have launched awareness-raising campaigns, urging members to denounce acts of harassment to the works council or trade union representatives.

The extent to which voluntary initiatives concerning sexual harassment have been taken by the social partners varies greatly both within and between countries. Two remarkable trends,
however, can be seen. First, where initiatives have been taken, a large area of consensus usually develops between management and trade unions. Dealing with sexual harassment becomes an issue for industrial relations cooperation rather than conflict. Second, a high degree of consensus has also emerged as to the general shape of sexual harassment policies and procedures which it is appropriate to adopt at the enterprise level.

Although legislation is essential, a workplace free of sexual harassment cannot be achieved by legislation alone. Prevention is the best approach to the problem and that involves the taking of affirmative steps at the national, enterprise and trade union levels.

### Issues in combatting the problem

- Tackling sensitive issues associated with well-worn patterns of human relationships
- Changing attitudes with respect to the role of women at work, and how they are treated and valued as workers
- Sensitizing men and women to their behaviour, and learning new behaviour with everyone taking some responsibility
- Educating managers on the costs and consequences of not preventing or stopping sexual harassment in the workplace

The challenge is to be able to create a workplace atmosphere which discourages sexual intimidation and unwelcome sexual conduct, while promoting a relaxed, collegial and productive working environment and relationships, where the dignity of every worker is respected by all.

### Small enterprise development

#### Boosting employment

#### Key issues

Profound structural changes are taking place in the economies of both the developed and developing world. Micro- and small enterprises have become important job generators, boosting employment around the world. One striking feature of this trend is the significant rise, especially in the past decade, in the number of women entrepreneurs, mainly in such enterprises.
In most countries, women entrepreneurs not only have to contend with policy, regulatory and institutional environments which are unfriendly and have a bias against small enterprises, they also face obstacles and barriers simply because they are women. Relative to men, women do not have equal access to finance, assets, technology and services, they have relatively lower educational levels and restricted access to vocational training opportunities, they face culturally and socially rooted negative attitudes towards women in business, they have conflicting role demands and time constraints, and they often lack assertiveness and self-confidence. The majority of women working in micro- and small enterprises worldwide are still concentrated in a limited range of low-profit sectors with poor working conditions, most often in the informal sector, the very enterprises which are the most vulnerable to economic downturns.

However, more and more women are owners or managers of small modern enterprises in less traditional sectors which have a high potential for growth. These more fortunate women establish and develop their own enterprises because they seek economic independence, or flexible working hours, in the absence of adequate or reasonably priced child-care facilities, or because they want to overcome professional frustration arising from the "glass ceiling" preventing advancement.

As a result, there is a high degree of diversity among women small-scale entrepreneurs in terms of their motivations, socioeconomic status, types of businesses and potential for growth. This has important implications for the design, promotion and implementation of small enterprise development policies and programmes.

**ILO Strategy**

The ILO's activities in the field of women's entrepreneurship development cover research, technical cooperation, advisory services and the organization of meetings on the subject. As far as possible, ILO's technical cooperation activities in this field use a "holistic" approach; that is, they provide the building-blocks needed for the women to succeed in business, by designing and implementing programmes in skills and entrepreneurship training, productivity improvement, managerial capacity-building, how to access required resources, institution-building and strengthening, policy advice, etc.

The ILO's advisory services deal mainly with the formulation of policies and regulations, and the elaboration of programmes which are conducive to the creation and growth of enterprises. To address issues related to microenterprise development it is necessary to bring gender issues into the legal and regulatory framework governing micro- and small enterprise development. In particular, it requires measures to address underlying gender inequalities in access to resources, institutions and decision-making processes, so as to enable gender-free access to small enterprise development programmes. It also requires macroeconomic and social policy. In addition, attention is also focused on ensuring that policies and regulations promote the integration of informal sector enterprises into the economic mainstream by progressively upgrading their standards and practices.

This attention to gender concerns will increase within the framework of the ILO's BESED programme (Boosting Employment through Small Enterprise Development) to match the growing importance of female entrepreneurship. The gender component of BESED will strengthen its cooperation with local partners involved in small enterprise development:
governments, employers' and workers' organizations, chambers of commerce and associations of small enterprises.

**BESED gender strategy**

- Ensure that gender concerns are effectively taken into account in the planning, implementation and evaluation of all BESED programmes, products and publications
- Develop new gender-based approaches to small enterprise development
- Develop women-specific pilot programmes and products, where gender imbalances exist and as a means of redressing them, bearing in mind the gender context
- Provide ongoing support, awareness-raising and training in gender analysis for BESED and related field staff in Multidisciplinary Teams (MDTs) and projects

**Social funds**

**Sidestepping the bureaucracy**

A "social fund" is an organization which channels resources into mostly small-scale projects for eligible poor and vulnerable groups. It covers various programmes designed to play both adistributive role - to reduce the impact of poverty - and a risk reduction role - to protect individuals, households and communities against unexpected and uninsured income and consumption risks.

**A brief overview**

Since the first social fund was set up in Bolivia in 1987, they have become a popular and high-profile instrument of social policy. They are introduced into a variety of situations and in countries with diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. Originally designed and implemented as a short-term emergency response to alleviate the negative social consequences of economic reform and structural adjustment policies - particularly in Latin America and Africa - over time their focus has shifted towards achieving the longer-term objectives of poverty reduction and the delivery of social services on a permanent basis.

**Critical policy issues**

The evolution from palliative short-term programmes to mainstream and permanent instruments raises a number of important and multi-faceted policy issues relating, inter alia, to national poverty-reduction strategies, effectiveness in reaching the poor, social participation and partnerships, and sustainable approaches to the delivery of services. Paradoxically, while it is recognized that women bear the brunt of economic reform and globalization, the gender dimensions of social funds have received scant attention.
Unique and flexible

Although different and changing terminology is often used to describe social funds, the ILO has identified a number of common characteristics and features associated with them, including their reliance on external funding (see Table below), their unique ability to be multi-sectoral but have one funding agency, and their demand-driven approach, high profile and visibility. In addition, social funds usually have an exceptional institutional setup, since they are located outside of government bureaucracy, and thereby enjoy a substantial degree of autonomy. Notwithstanding these common features, their objectives, target groups, scope of operations and programme components are subject to wide variations.

Social Funds - By Per Cent of External Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>No. of Countries</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I (&gt;80% external funding)</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II (50%-80% external funding)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III (&lt;50% external funding)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Awad, Azita Berar: Social Funds Revisited. An overview with a particular focus on employment and gender dimensions (ILO, 1997).

The gender dimensions of social funds: An international response

Despite the wide recognition of the social costs of structural adjustment and the trend towards the feminization of poverty, there still remains little awareness of the different ways in which economic reform and structural adjustment programmes affect men and women. Little attention has been paid to the gender dimension of social funds. In response to this, the ILO undertook an action programme to respond to two important issues raised during the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing: combating the feminization of poverty, and integrating a gender perspective into the debate and action on macroeconomic reforms. The ILO commissioned case studies to initiate national dialogue and raise awareness of the need to improve the performance of existing social funds in terms of their gender dimension.

Major hurdles

- While women, especially those living in poverty, are considered a priority target for the social fund programmes, systematic measures to translate this priority into action have not been taken, and achievements are seriously lagging behind stated objectives
- Systematic and regular collection of gender-disaggregated data (i.e., data broken down by gender) is not common, demonstrating the lack of importance attached to the gender perspective
- Women represent a higher percentage of "beneficiaries" falling into social welfare sector activities, while men are viewed as primary targets for employment promotion programmes
• The participation of women in the demand-making process, and their decision making ability at community levels, is seriously limited
• The infrastructure development programmes which do include women, apply a different recruitment pattern and a different wage structure for men and women
• Programmes largely perpetuate and reproduce gender-based unequal and discriminatory patterns of employment and social participation. Social funds have not attempted to promote social reform in this area

The ILO is currently preparing guidelines on gender issues in social funds, and in the year 2000 will support national activities to strengthen the gender and employment dimensions of selected funds.

Social security and social protection

Fair systems for women in all sectors

The problem

General: Most workers in the world today have no form of social protection, aside from their ability to work and to save from their earnings. And the massive incorporation of women into the labour market in recent times has also called into question those social protection schemes such as social security which do exist. Most of the social security systems throughout the world were established when the proportion of women in the labour market was very low. Many were developed on the traditional family model, based on marriage where the man was the sole breadwinner and was fully integrated into the labour market, and where the woman was in charge of domestic work and raising children.

This view of family structure has changed significantly over the years, because of the important increase in the number of working women. To this must be added the changes which have occurred in the composition and size of families resulting from the increase in divorce, cohabitation and single-parent families - mostly headed by women - and from families with fewer children. There also have been radical shifts in values, particularly those which emphasize the importance of the individual and which demand full gender equality. These transformations have significant implications for social security and social protection which must now adjust to contemporary conditions.

The informal sector: Informal sector workers are among the most numerous of those without social protection, because they are excluded from state-sponsored and private programs, insurance in particular. And women workers in the informal sector are even more vulnerable to multiple risks, because of their dual roles both in the workplace and in the home, as well as their higher levels of social exclusion.
Why social protection?

Social protection mechanisms are critical in ensuring that people have the ability to work and to work productively, that assets accumulated through the earnings of their labour are protected from various risks faced by the working population, and that those people not working have the means to retain or build their assets.

The large contribution of women to the economy remains mostly unrecognized by the state and the community, and is largely invisible in national and regional statistics. Women therefore remain highly susceptible to a continuing cycle of poverty. They have also traditionally been excluded from direct participation in the design of social security schemes, and are often the most affected because of their multiple burdens of economic, biological and social roles.

What's wrong with existing schemes?

General: While traditional mechanisms of social protection exist (kinship ties, care by children, local credit sources and savings groups, etc.), these have not always proved to be effective. Research also shows that market forces alone cannot be expected to provide insurance for the poor even if the demand for it exists.

However, the state often cannot carry the full burden of effectively covering the entire population, and innovations need to be introduced into management and funding. Furthermore, state-sponsored social security and private social insurance schemes are known for their gender-biased benefits, which treat women as dependents and beneficiaries, and often address "feminine" concerns only through the provision of maternity benefits and/or maternal and child health care. It is relatively rare to find social insurance mechanisms which address the multiple roles of the working woman in a comprehensive way. Most do not treat her as an individual requiring specific types of insurance and flexibility in the design of insurance schemes, but consider her as part of a family unit with the man as breadwinner.

The informal sector: Employment-based social security schemes (where the employer and the state contribute some portion of their financial cost) suffer from a fundamental flaw vis-à-vis the informal sector. There is no clearly defined employer (most informal sector workers are casual wage workers or are self-employed) and where an employer exists (in the case of small enterprises, factories, contract work, etc.), the employer's contribution toward social protection for the employee is rarely legislated or enforceable.

Of significant concern is the growing "feminization" of different forms of labour, often the least protected in social legislation by governments, and therefore often the most exploited. Sordid examples have been found in highly informal markets, where contract and piece-work rates are prevalent, in export zones, and especially in home-based and largely "invisible" work. These workers have extremely long working hours, most often in very poor conditions and for a very low wage. Production and supply chains are highly fragmented, further complicating the role of legislation and the enforcement of social protection responsibilities, and particularly complicating the mechanism of financial support and contributory participation for such schemes, should they exist.
What progress has been made?

In industrialized countries: Significant progress has been achieved, in particular in the field of legislation aimed at equal treatment of men and women in social security schemes. In spite of this progress, however, there are still severe limitations in those schemes because of the large proportion of women working part-time, occasionally, in family enterprises or in the informal sector.

In countries in transition: As a consequence of economic restructuring, there has been a regression in social protection for women, specifically with regard to child care, health care and old-age pensions.

In developing countries: Progress has been modest and employment has grown in sectors not covered by social security, such as the informal sector and agriculture, in which a large percentage of workers are women. Furthermore, structural adjustment programmes applied in these countries have resulted in an increase in unemployment and poverty, touching women severely.

What's still needed?

Although it would be desirable to introduce recognized social security rights for each member of the community, including non-salaried women or those who have had to interrupt their employment to raise their children, it is hardly likely that economic and financial conditions will make it possible to envisage this extension in full in the coming years. Therefore, transitional schemes will have to be designed, all the more so since different generations of women coexist who have not had the same opportunities of access to employment. In this perspective, close consideration should be given, particularly in the developing countries, to the possibility of establishing local, small-scale insurance schemes, such as less formal systems based on the already existing solidarity networks for women. This type of protection can often be more effective and adapted more easily to national circumstances, and to the informal sector.

While NGOs have been effective in addressing these needs, the overall problem requires state-sponsored legislation and schemes, as well as new designs and new forms of participation from the private sector. A successful example of the latter is that of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) in India. It is one of the largest, comprehensive, contributory social insurance programs for informal sector women workers today. It is the largest scheme in India, presently insuring over 32,000 women workers and, significantly, was developed with initial government assistance.

The SEWA scheme has significant implications for social security financing and management for informal sector workers around the world. Its lessons and management style show a way forward for community and occupation-based programs in both developing and developed countries.

What is the ILO doing?

The STEP Unit (Strategies and Tools Against Social Exclusion and Poverty) of the ILO is also studying programs in other parts of the world, especially in Africa and Latin America, where
institutions and financing mechanisms for the informal sector are considerably different, and other challenges exist.

The planned programme of the Department of Social Security is closely linked to one of the strategic objectives of the ILO, "To enhance the coverage and effectiveness of social protection for all." It will have a clear impact on development, because it will improve the employment conditions of a large part of the workforce outside of the formal sector. In addition, all of its activities will ensure that women have equal access to social protection and are not disadvantaged because of their domestic and child care responsibilities. The programme will be oriented toward these ends. The orientation and focus of the programme are briefly summarized here to serve as recommendations and potential guidelines for other organizations concerned with this important problem.

### Orientation

- Work for the suppression of all direct discriminatory provisions in social security legislation
- Adapt solutions to each country in relation to the problem of reconciling gainful employment with family responsibilities
- Develop mechanisms to cover the needs of low-income women, and expand assistance to the poorest through non-contributory arrangements, as a complement to traditional social security schemes

### Focus

- Analyze the social protection systems of member States to design measures to protect women from being rushed into inappropriate jobs
- Analyze the factors which have contributed to the exclusion of the majority of workers from statutory social security coverage
- Identify and analyze possible partnerships and alliances with local solidarity networks, civil societies, local governments, NGOs, private sector and international organizations, with the aim of extending social protection for both men and women
- Provide technical assistance to countries in the implementation of non-traditional, innovative schemes
- Improve social protection statistics; in particular, statistics disaggregated (i.e., broken down) by sex, in order to better understand women's needs

The ILO has also adopted Conventions dealing with various aspects of social security.
ILO Conventions on Social Security

- Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102)
- Equality of Treatment (Social Security) Convention, 1962 (No. 118)
- Maintenance of Social Security Rights Convention, 1982 (No. 157)

The challenge

The challenge remains to find an appropriate community-level approach which addresses equitable pooling of insurance risks, while also ensuring that the sustainability of the scheme is not endangered. Innovative financing mechanisms and a questioning of the uses of development assistance are required. While much of community insurance can be based on mechanisms of risk-pooling through solidarity and the role of the state, this does not exclude the participation of the private sector where suitable.

The integrated approach to social insurance has benefited NGOs, since linking banking schemes to insurance has increased membership in both programs - and significantly raised interest in union membership where available. The work of the STEP Unit, the Department of Social Security and other research and policy initiatives around the world have marked the beginning of a change in emphasis of governments, NGOs and international institutions. The requirements of all members of the labour force need to be addressed, especially those of informal sector workers which are usually neglected.

Perhaps most significantly, research studies have shown that poor workers are willing and able to pay for services which they see as relevant, efficient and sensitive to their needs, and where they can be directly involved in their design and effectiveness.

Are governments and the private sector listening?

Trade unions

Surmounting the barriers

Key issues

In the trade union world, women as a group have often been left out of the unions' inner circles, even though their participation in the labour force has grown substantially in the last three decades. Despite the fact that women now constitute a significant proportion of union membership - in some sectors 30% to 50% (agriculture, teachers, nurses) - their active participation is still quite limited. This, of course, also means low representation of women in the higher levels of the unions. In fact, there are barriers to their more active participation.
Barriers

- Family responsibilities: A woman active in a trade union usually has a triple burden: family responsibilities, her job and the union
- Lack of confidence: Many women tend to think that they are not as capable as men in certain areas related to union activities
- "Illiteracy": They neither know the rules of the game nor get the chance to learn them
- A male union environment: The notion that working in the union is a 24-hour a day job, often involving the use of sexist language and low interest in women's issues - "the old-boy network"
- Job segregation: Women are often employed under the supervision of men and sometimes find it difficult to represent workers in higher grades

Breaking down the barriers: What the unions can do

- Collect membership data by sex and age to know who their members are, to better identify and serve their needs
- Remove sexist language in course materials and bulletins on the work floor
- Sensitize men about the role women actually play in daily life
- Set up a target group or a women's commission to keep the pressure on the union concerning women's needs
- Provide training for women members, all-women's groups if necessary, but mixed groups are ideal, so that women can see any education gaps, the better to fill them
- Reserve a certain number of seats for women in decision-making bodies, providing extra seats for them above the normal number if necessary
- Affirmative action to have a given number of women in decision-making posts by a certain date, supporting this action by training women to be able to fill those posts
- Hold trade union meetings at times which are convenient for women workers, keeping in mind their family responsibilities
- Set up child-care facilities during trade union meetings
- Appoint an independent women's adviser at the national union level to provide assistance and advice to help overcome the many barriers while climbing up the ladder
- Pay more attention to gender issues in collective bargaining agreements, which in most countries are a key means of determining terms and conditions of employment

Progress

Over the past decade trade union organizations have been refining their strategies to confront the problem of women's chronic under-representation in leadership positions. In most cases, the starting point has been the adoption of a union policy statement pledging to improve the lot of women workers and to encourage women to seek leadership posts in the union. However, the declarations on paper often remain both the starting point and the end point of the action.
A second step has been self-analysis; unions identify factors affecting women's participation at different levels. As a third step, some unions have changed their structure and working methods to help women overcome the barriers which they encounter. Often, women's units and women's or equality committees have been set up or strengthened. In a growing number of cases the structural change has taken the form of reserving seats for women on the executive body; some workers' organizations have even included a paragraph in their Constitution specifying that this should be done. More and more education programmes have been focusing on women to help them develop their leadership skills. And efforts have been made to sensitize both men and women trade unionists to women's issues.

What the ILO has done

In recent years, the Bureau for Workers Activities of the ILO has attempted to remedy the lack of women's participation:

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<th>ILO action</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Each invitation letter for ILO seminars emphasizes the need for women's participation</td>
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<td>• It is suggested that one male and one female participant be selected per organization, if possible, to ensure equal representation</td>
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<td>• An item on women's issues is included on the agenda whenever possible, to ensure that there is discussion on women's issues</td>
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<td>• When feasible, a women's-only workshop/seminar is organized to help to counterbalance the lack of women's participation</td>
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<td>• In November 1997, the Worker's Group of the Governing Body adopted a Resolution to take measures to increase the participation of women in ILO meetings. A rule was established, and is being implemented, that 30% of all workers' participants to sectoral meetings should be female. If the target of 30% is not met, nominations for office are reconsidered</td>
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Transition economy restructuring

Its effect on women

Political and Social reforms have brought fundamental changes to the labour markets of transition countries. Transition crises and the need to adjust to new market conditions and increased labour productivity have led to large employment losses, translated partly into high open unemployment and partly into withdrawals from the labour market, often enforced by lack of jobs. And women have suffered the most because of these changes. The impact of employment losses, high unemployment and structural changes experienced by these countries has been unevenly distributed by gender, with women having been especially hard-hit.
Employment in transition

The composition of employment by sector has also changed dramatically. The most serious losses being experienced in the industrial sector. Industrial branches with high value added were hardest hit by economic recession. By contrast, others have suffered fewer losses and in many countries their share of production and employment has increased.

The contribution of agriculture to employment has rapidly declined in countries where the rural population can find major sources of income outside of agriculture. In other countries, agriculture has become a buffer for unemployment through an increase in subsistence farming, and the share of agriculture in total employment has increased.

The service sector has grown steeply in most transition countries, since most new jobs have been created in that sector, particularly in financial and producer services, in public administration, and in trade, tourism and other consumer services. Conversely, a few countries have not experienced substantial employment gains in services, apart from state administration and the financial sector. However, such figures relate only to formal employment, while many services are carried out in the informal sector.

How have women fared?

Labour market tensions in the transition economies have often been solved to the detriment of women. They have faced discrimination in layoff and recruitment and, more often than men, have solved their uncomfortable situations by leaving the labour market. As a result, employment participation rates of women have declined more than those of men in most transition countries. Nevertheless, economic participation of women in transition countries has still remained among the highest in the world and, moreover, more than 90% of the employed women are working full-time. However, comparison of unemployment rates by gender does not provide uniform evidence that unemployment has hit women more frequently than men, but rather that women's unemployment is dependent on country-specific factors such as economic structure, social protection system, attitudes of employers towards women workers and the quality of statistical data.

Women in Employment

The share of women in total employment has declined in most transition countries. In countries with relatively higher shares of traditionally female-dominated industries which have recovered from economic crisis, women have been doing quite well. In the services sector women still dominate; however, their share has declined in most countries as a result of new development trends within the sector, resulting in significant changes in job segregation by gender. On the one hand, rapidly expanding services offering high-skilled and dynamic job opportunities now tend to engage more men, so the share of women has declined there. Industries offering good opportunities for small business, such as trade, hotels and restaurants, and certain household services have also recently attracted more men than before. By contrast, social services like education, culture and health care, highly feminized already in the past and mostly funded by public budgets, have even higher shares of women workers.
Wage Differentials

The common denominator of all these gender-related structural changes is wage differentials. Men tend to leave jobs for better paid ones, many of which have newly emerged in sectors traditionally dominated by women. Such jobs are usually either managerial posts and senior public administration positions, where salaries have accelerated relative to other jobs, or own account/employer jobs. In contrast, jobs in social services, which are secure, often requiring high skills, but funded from squeezed public budgets and therefore having low wages, are mostly, and increasingly, occupied by women. The share of women in managerial posts, which in the past was much lower compared with men but gradually increasing, has again fallen in most transition economies. Women are also represented far less among private employers; usually less than one-third. Conversely, the concentration of women in general services has increased further. This changing sectoral and occupational job segregation by gender is attributed to persistent prejudices against women, claiming that they are unable or unwilling to supervise larger teams of workers or manage production units successfully. Employers also often discriminate against women in recruitment and upgrading, for child care reasons (parental leaves, extended to 2-4 years in most countries, are still taken almost exclusively by women) and in some countries managers even push women to take extended leave in order to reduce surplus labour. The ILO enterprise surveys also reveal more limited access of women workers to training in skills upgrading. Therefore, the career advancement of women has further slowed during transition. This new occupational segregation and increasing wage differentials have further widened the gap between male and female salaries in many transition countries.

What can be done?

Efforts to reduce the negative impact of structural changes on women, as well as the disadvantages and discrimination they face in these changing labour markets, should focus on several areas.
Recommendations

- Women should be better represented politically, by strengthening the women's movement both inside and outside political parties
- Anti-discriminatory legislation along with effective institutions and instruments to enforce them in practice
- Women should be encouraged to opt for education for professions outside those traditionally considered as "suitable" for them
- Women need competitive skills, so they must be given access to guidance to quality education and training for professions demanded by the labour market, and should be encouraged to undergo retraining when necessary.
- Employers should be stimulated to be more positively oriented towards the career advancement of women, and encouraged to promote more women to managerial positions, with the help of employers' organizations to convince them of the advantages of gender-sensitive personnel policy.
- Women should be encouraged to start their own businesses and be given access to effective support services and special credit lines.
- Women need more access to active labour market policies improving their employability and assisting them in job placement, including subsidized employment if necessary, and to the availability of flexible work arrangements for women with family responsibilities.
- There is a need for a newly designed system of child care, facilitating the employment of women.

Violence at work

A costly burden

Violence at work is not only dangerous for the affected worker, it also has an impact on the dignity and the quality of life of the persons at risk. Moreover, it affects productivity because it has negative and distracting effects on the working environment. In a word, violence in the workplace is a costly burden for the worker, the enterprise, and the community.

What is it?

Violence at work covers a wide variety of behaviour, ranging from physical to psychological abuse. Traditionally, attention has focused on physical violence, but the impact and harm caused by psychological violence is increasingly being recognized. Attention is also growing with respect to violence perpetrated by repeated unacceptable behaviour, such as sexual harassment, bullying or "mobbing".
The dimension of violence is dramatic. In specific sectors particularly, it is growing. Awareness is increasing; however, much of violence is still undisclosed.

Who is vulnerable?

Vulnerability to violence varies with the type of job. Workers facing the highest risk of violence are those dealing with money, with the public, those who make decisions affecting clients' or patients' lives, those working in care-giving institutions, in maintenance, working at night or working alone. Women are concentrated in many of these sectors and are the most vulnerable.

Some categories of women workers are doubly vulnerable to violence:

- Migrants and workers of different ethnic origin from their fellow workers
- Women workers in export processing zones

Who perpetrates it?

Violence originates from family members, fellow workers, and customers. Violence is a means of control, to which women are more vulnerable because of their age and employment status.

It becomes even more oppressive when it is associated with hierarchical power at the workplace.

What causes it?

Poverty, unemployment, economic crises, income insecurity, collapse of the state, competition for economic and property resources, unequal distribution of wealth, are all roots from which violence against women grows.

Migration and human trafficking are related to perceived economic disparities. They exist because there is a market, driven by consumer demand, and because in some parts of the world the feminization of poverty, lack of access to resources and the growing rates of unemployment and economic insecurity have expanded the pool of recruits for both trafficking and migration.

Some labour and migration policies indirectly increase the vulnerability of women to violence:

- Exemptions from existing labour standards have been granted to export processing zones or maquiladoras, in order to attract foreign investment
- Labour exporting countries have often tended to undercut prevailing market conditions, offering female labour on more favourable terms, detrimental to the well-being of the migrant women. In labour-importing countries, gender selectivity and sensitivity of immigration laws have often pushed migrant women into precarious, illegal and unprotected employment.

Cultural norms and the resulting perception in different contexts and cultures of what constitutes violence is extremely diverse. Discrimination against women, and gender stereotypes in many walks of life - including the workplace - tend to perpetuate violence against women. Violence at work as a human rights issue cannot be dismissed on cultural grounds.
What can be done about it?

It is important to approach the problem of violence comprehensively. The ILO approaches violence against women in the world of work as a three-pronged issue: a human rights issue, a labour issue, and a health and safety issue. Here are some recommendations which can reduce the problem:

- At the enterprise level: Preventing violence at work is management's responsibility. Violence is detrimental to the efficient functioning of the workplace. Any strategy to combat violence in the workplace should seek to address the organizational, managerial and interpersonal roots of the violence, and to increase the security of workers and provide rehabilitation and psychological counseling, when necessary, to help victims cope with the aftermath of violence.

- At the national level: National legislation should be revised if necessary to consider violence as an offense, to penalize its perpetrators and to strengthen the protection of its victims. Violence should be approached in such a manner that all aspects are considered - legal, medical, psychological and social assistance - at all stages - prevention, treatment of victims, treatment of perpetrators, reintegration.

- At the international level: The Beijing Platform for Action has brought more visibility to the problem of violence against women, but international legal instruments to combat violence and exploitation are still rare - and those which exist have been poorly ratified. More must be done in this area.

Sensitization campaigns and lobbying are important to raise consciousness and, in some instances, have led to the negotiation of codes of conduct regarding working conditions. Concerning migration and the trafficking of women and children, cooperation should be sought at the regional or sub-regional level. Protection of migrant women should be addressed at two levels: by bilateral agreements, or internationally by agreed minimum standards of treatment.

What has the ILO done about it?

The ILO has been concerned about the problem for many years. The protection of women (and children, both male and female) has been addressed in several ILO Conventions and Recommendations. Furthermore, the 1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, reiterated the necessary elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, the effective abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination with respect to employment and occupation. In 1999, the International Labour Conference also discussed trafficking in the context of the newest ILO Convention on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour.
## ILO Conventions and Recommendations

- Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)
- Migration for Employment (Revised) Convention, 1949 (No. 97)
- Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105)
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)
- Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138)
- Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975 (No. 143)
- Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (No. 169) (The first international instrument in which sexual harassment was addressed directly.)
- Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and Recommendation, 1999 (No. 190)

## Vocational training for women

### An imperfect world

In a perfect world, the issue of vocational training for women would not need to be raised. Everyone, no matter what their gender, would not only have access to training but to a labour market which would value exclusively the excellence of work. Discrimination in employment and occupation would not exist.

However, we know that this is not a perfect world, but rather a world which has very real labour-market barriers for women. Even with the best of technical qualifications, they face enormous challenges, which range from balancing home and work responsibilities, having access to vocational training, and the segregation of occupations by gender. Therefore, vocational training for women is not the unique answer, but rather a very important part of a process which must be linked to social and economic reforms in order to promote gender equality in the world of work.

### The situation

Three situations exist in the world which are important starting points for exploring the issues affecting vocational training programmes for women, and how such training can be reformed to make it more accessible to women.

- **Situation 1: Male-dominated occupations are seven times more common than female-dominated occupations**

Gender segregation in job skills is promulgated by social and cultural considerations, and plays a key role in both the vocational training choices available to women and in the selection of courses offered by training institutions. Breaking the cycle of gender-segregated employment requires a range of facilitating policies such as equal-opportunity programmes and anti-
discrimination laws, as well as stronger career information systems at all levels of society. For example, national public awareness campaigns which promote women who have had significant success in non-traditional occupations would help to publicize role models which other women can emulate.

- **Situation 2: Women are seen as a high risk for skills investment, and employers are often unwilling to invest in training programmes for them**

Vocational training institutions may be the only source women have for developing technical skills. It is important to have such institutions which are geared toward flexible skills-training programmes and information services which women can use. Women are then likely to be better equipped to enter and re-enter the labour force which they may have to leave many times during their working lives because of family responsibilities, work situations, the need for skills upgrading, etc. Equally important as training programmes is having information systems and advisory services which women can call on when needed. Providing women with advisory support at pre- and post-training levels is a critical need and should be balanced with training programs which are both technically sound, flexible in timing, and labour-market oriented. The more information potential students have access to the more it increases their decision-making potential regarding occupations.

- **Situation 3: In many countries training systems are ill-equipped to meet the skills needs of different sectors adequately; broad-based skills such as computer literacy, interpersonal skills and analytical skills are often missing from vocational training curricula**

Too often vocational training institutions focus on long-term "traditional" occupational courses. Balancing this design with short-term specialized skills training will require change in their organizational design. In particular, it will require reform in the training of instructors and curricula, which fuses analytical and technical skills. Specialized instructor-training programmes which recognize the social constraints and family responsibilities which women experience when entering a training programme, need to be part of an instructor's training. In addition, training in "andragogic" (adult learning) theory as well as in teaching methodology which goes beyond traditional instructor-led activities and are different from the training needs of youth, should be part of every instructor's curriculum.

**Channels for change**

Developing vocational training programmes for women will not alone eliminate discrimination in employment. However, in addition to developing job skills, such specially designed programmes can provide a medium to enhance dialogue on policy, and promote social and economic development. When linked to social reforms, vocational training programmes for women go beyond just skills training, by offering tremendous potential for integrating gender issues into not only vocational training, but into the labour market as well. Vocational training programmes, through tripartite advisory panels, offer channels for change. Furthermore, strengthening the capacity of vocational training institutions for the training and education of women benefits all of their users, by initiating institutional reform.
Women in Management

Missing rungs in the career ladder

The problem

Women are better educated and hold more jobs worldwide than ever before, representing more than 40 per cent of the world's labour force. Yet, most women continue to suffer from occupational segregation in the workplace and rarely break through the so-called "glass ceiling" - the invisible barrier preventing women's access to the top-level management and professional positions in enterprises and organizations. Their overall share of management jobs rarely exceeds 20 per cent according to national surveys, dropping to 2 to 3 per cent in the largest and most powerful enterprises and organizations.

The effects

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Result</th>
<th>Consequences</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Women usually earn less than men</td>
<td>• Reduced contribution to household income</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Women are underutilized</td>
<td>• Lower competitiveness, economic loss for the enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of access to decision-making functions</td>
<td>• Lower competitiveness, economic loss for the enterprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lack of role models</td>
<td>• Perpetuation of gender discrimination</td>
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Extensive changes in labour market composition, with women's increased economic activity in a widening range of occupations along with their rising skill levels, has led to mounting pressure for more attention to be paid to the issue of women in management. In spite of the inequalities, women around the world have made considerable progress in capturing an ever-increasing share of professional and management positions. In some countries, women occupy over 40 per cent of all administrative and managerial jobs. Not only are women increasingly running as much as 30 per cent or more of small and medium-sized businesses in many countries, but in so doing they are creating jobs for others.

But obstacles remain

Research findings show, however, just how difficult it is to break through the glass ceiling. The higher the position, the more glaring the gender gap. Studies demonstrate that even though women are often better educated and qualified than men in the same job, they still have to work harder and perform better than their male counterparts in order to move ahead.

A very real and practical constraint for women to achieving high-level positions is the responsibility they bear for raising children and performing household tasks. An important feature of professional - and especially managerial - work is the long hours often required to gain
recognition and eventual promotion. Career progression policies and structures are often designed to emphasize the period between 30 and 40 years of age as the most important for career development. But these are precisely the most intensive years for child rearing. Thus, women who want both a family and a career have to juggle heavy responsibilities in both domains. A more subtle constraint is that even women without family responsibilities are still seen as potential mothers, with the result that investment in their training and career opportunities is often given less attention than those of their male counterparts, thus reducing their chances of obtaining top jobs further down the road.

One of the main obstacles to women's advancement in the workplace is that of sex stereotyping regarding women's ability and willingness to accept positions of responsibility, especially if long hours, travel and relocation are involved. The consequences for many women include being placed in less strategic areas of activity, not being given varied and challenging assignments, and not being exposed to the range of operations and activities which are crucial factors for climbing the ladder to top management jobs. Since, as a result, chief executive officers see that few women have appropriate business experience and have not been long enough in a variety of management positions to be selected for top executive jobs, this situation is a vicious circle.

A change for the better

Fortunately, many enterprises are realizing that women's talents and skills are good for business. They are making moves to attract and retain women as professionals and managers. An important step in this direction is the adoption by many enterprises of an equal opportunity policy. Positive or affirmative action approaches often form part of an overall equality policy in order to level the playing field and give everyone an equal chance to climb the corporate ladder.

Measures such as flexible working arrangements, training and coaching, challenging and varied assignments, career and succession planning, and policies to promote family-friendly enterprises and to prevent sexual harassment at work, are all positive steps in this direction. Training in management skills, assertiveness training and on-the-job training in different areas to enable women to gain broader experience and knowledge of the structure and functions of an organization, are key instruments which provide them with the self-confidence, techniques, knowledge and contacts they need to forge ahead.

Enterprise "work and family" or "work and life" programmes help employees to reduce stress and be more productive. Features of such programmes usually include leave for childbirth and family care, child and elder care facilities or services, and flexible work arrangements, such as part-time work, "flexi-time", compressed work weeks and telework. While these measures often aim to attract and retain women, it is important that male employees also be encouraged to take up such options. Men may also have family responsibilities and thus need to find a healthy balance between work and personal life. If women alone make use of these measures, this can be a potential disadvantage because they may be regarded as less committed to their jobs.

Commitment to policies and programmes to combat sexual harassment are fundamental in preventing acts of unwelcome sexual behaviour in the workplace for men and women alike. They are particularly important for women moving into management, usually a predominantly male
occupation, and one in which women managers may be resented by male subordinates, peers and higher-level managers.

**Career-building strategies**

Specific strategies which have been found to help women advance include "networking", career-tracking, and "mentoring". Women's involvement in informal enterprise networks is essential for collecting invaluable information, gaining visibility, and establishing contacts and support for obtaining higher-level jobs. As part of their human resources and equal opportunity policies, companies should consciously encourage and invite women to be part of such networks for their personal and professional lives. Career-tracking identifies women with high potential, and helps them gain visibility and experience through challenging and high-profile assignments. Special training may be provided, as well as coaching by high-level managers. Such career-tracking is available to men more readily, because of the traditional perception of management as a male occupation.

Mentoring is a process in which older, experienced managers engage in dialogue and exchange of information and ideas with younger potential managers. It is an important conduit for the transmission of the culture and institutional memory of an enterprise. It has typically been practised by the pairing of older and younger men in an enterprise on an informal basis. As a strategy to promote women, enterprises in some countries are introducing formal mentoring programmes for women with high potential. Since most high-level managers tend to be men, it is important that the programme be formal, limited in time and monitored to avoid the social problems associated with a man sharing power and information with a woman. Mentoring also helps male managers understand better the difficulties experienced by women, differences in male and female approaches, and the importance of including both approaches in the functioning of an enterprise.

**Good business**

Whatever strategies are adopted, the main ingredient for success in recruiting and retaining women is a firm commitment of top management to gender equality, including the adoption of a comprehensive approach to ensure that it is an issue at all levels - and that all managers are accountable for its implementation. Apart from legal requirements and changing social views on women's roles, probably the most motivating factor for companies to promote women in management is the realization that it is good business. Not only is utilizing the full potential of trained and qualified women a value-added advantage within the enterprise, but it also improves a company's image and, eventually, customer satisfaction with services and products which are more "women-friendly". Women's visibility as managers reinforces this, especially in relation to women consumers.
**Women with Disabilities**

A woman with a disability is first and foremost a woman. But she is a woman with a "double disadvantage". Not only must she contend with the "traditional" barriers and challenges facing women in the home, the community and the world of work, but she also suffers the additional hardships, barriers and lack of opportunities resulting from her disability. Because of her impairment - and society's perception of it - she is often isolated, discriminated against, discouraged, and sometimes even prevented from participating actively in family and public life.

**What is it like for a woman to live with a disability?**

She is more likely to be poor or to have a lower standard of living than her peers, to be illiterate or to be less educated than others of her age group, to be unemployed or to earn a lower income than non-disabled women, to be physically and economically dependent upon others, and to suffer more physical, sexual or mental abuse than other women.

She is less likely to survive or to live as long a life as non-disabled women, to find a partner and to establish her own home, to join organizations or to participate in decision-making, and to benefit from development efforts - even those targeting women or persons with disabilities in general.

Or, in her own words:
No Application Form

There is no application form
To be disabled
If there were
I do not imagine myself filling one

It is difficult to live in this world
Some people look at me
As a useless creature
Yet they do not know

They do not know
That they are lost
That I do things they can't

In the streets
Their attention is drawn
They stare
As if I've come from Heaven
Some look with merciful faces
Some with the eyes of ignorance

So if you see a disabled person
Do not laugh
It may happen to you
Because there is no application form

If there were
I do not imagine myself filling one

by Nomathemba Mkandla, Zimbabwe
(From No Application Form: Poems and
Stories by
Women with Disabilities from
Southern Africa, ILO, 1993)

In most developing countries, especially in rural areas, girls and women:

- Bear a major share of the burden of poverty, both physically and economically. If disabled, they are even poorer, are totally dependent on others for survival and usually have a dismal future
• Often have less food, health care and education than boys and men. Those with disabilities usually get even less food, access to health care and education than other family members.
• Are expected to perform all household work - cooking, fetching water and wood for fuel, going to the market, doing washing and laundry, minding younger children, gardening, cleaning the house and yard, among other daily tasks. Disabled girls and women are often regarded as useless and are not expected or encouraged to help with these tasks, even if physically able.
• Rarely participate in decision-making, either within the family or in the community. Decisions concerning girls and women with disabilities are usually made for them - they are rarely consulted, and almost never have an opportunity to make decisions for themselves.

Furthermore, women with disabilities rarely have an opportunity to get married, but many have children. Due to ignorance, poverty and a longing to be accepted, women with disabilities are often victims of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases.

As many as one in four households in developing countries has a family member with a physical or mental impairment, and half of those are female. The causes of impairment often reflect the extent of poverty in a country - lack of primary health care, disease and chronic illness, lack of safe drinking water, poor sanitation, pollution, as well as home, transportation and work accidents, and natural and man-made disasters, including armed conflict. Many are impairments which, in industrialized countries, can be corrected medically or for which technical aids and devices or assistance are available to facilitate the normal activities of daily living and participation in working life.

In most industrialized countries, especially in urban areas:

• Women with disabilities often have access to health care and rehabilitation services; some have access to education and vocational training opportunities. Many are working. Many are married and have families. In these countries, the challenge is not so much survival, but equality of opportunity – equal access to the same services and opportunities as those available to non-disabled women in society.
• The priority issues for women with disabilities in the advanced countries of Asia, Europe and North America include increasing access to open employment as well as self-employment, combating discrimination in the workplace, increasing the availability of the attendant care required to enable many women with disabilities to work, changing negative public attitudes towards persons with disabilities, and providing easier access to public and private buildings, transportation and communication.
• Disability in an industrialized country is characterized differently from that in a developing country, but the percentage of persons affected (some 10% of the population of all ages) is often similar. The definition of disability also sometimes differs, as individuals with "unseen" impairments such as heart disease, cancer, mental illness, etc., are often considered as disabled, even when able to work.

Guidelines for improvement:
• When gathering data disaggregated (i.e., broken down) by sex, include data on the prevalence of disabilities among women and on their access to education, training, and employment and work opportunities
• When undertaking a needs assessment of women in general, include the practical and strategic needs of disabled women and women with disabled children or other family or household members, and address these needs in gender planning
• When assessing the needs of women with disabilities, assess their access to, and control over, resources and benefits
• Always consult with disabled women's organizations at the local, national and regional levels, and seek ways to empower them, since they know best the problems and needs of women with disabilities
• Encourage mainstream women's organizations to address disabled women's issues, and to actively include the participation of women with disabilities in their activities
• Encourage trade unions and employers' organizations to address disabled women's workplace issues, and to actively encourage disabled women workers and entrepreneurs to join their organizations
• Identify and promote positive measures which can increase opportunities and facilitate the training and employment of women with disabilities
• Include representatives of organizations of disabled women in the design of all development projects and programmes, both women-specific and general, and in policy and decision-making bodies at the project, community and national levels
• Remember that women with disabilities are first and foremost women, and should be included in all gender mainstreaming efforts

The ILO itself has set several standards for dealing with disabled persons in the labour market:

<table>
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<th>ILO Policy Instruments</th>
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<td>- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983 (No. 159)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Recommendation, 1983 (No. 168)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Vocational Rehabilitation of the Disabled Recommendation, 1955 (No. 99)</td>
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In addition, the UN has adopted "Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities", which serve as a policy guide for governments and a basis for action by disabled persons organizations, NGOs and international organizations.
Youth employment

Decent work for young women

Astronomical unemployment

A youth unemployment rate of more than 45% among young women in 1997, in one country! Disturbing? Yes, but that country is not alone in high rates. In fact, the same report shows that out of the 18 countries studied, two others had youth unemployment rates of more than 25%, four more had rates of over 15%, and still seven others had unemployment rates of 10% or more. In all, fully 14 of the 18 countries had youth unemployment rates of 10% or more. Is it any wonder then, that policymakers and planners the world over are realizing the need to address the special employment problems of young people (aged 15 to 24), as well as the overall issue of providing decent work for both women and men. The employment problems of young women, which are unique in several respects, may not receive the attention they deserve.

Better data needed

The problems of youth employment and unemployment vary greatly from country-to-country. Given the great diversity in the nature of labour markets and in the nature of women's participation in the labour force, it is difficult to interpret available information on the employment and unemployment situation of young women. The problem is compounded by differences in definitions, age coverage, and classification and presentation of data. There is certainly a need to obtain more data on the population aged 15 to 24 with appropriate breakdowns by age, sex, rural and urban residence, educational attainment, skill levels, marital and family status, as well as labour force participation rates and characteristics.

Gender differentials

Some of the available information is summarized in the chart below. The results suggest that unemployment rates of young women are higher than those of young men in some countries, but not in others. It is important to stress that unemployment rates are an imperfect measure, and such comparisons are fraught with difficulties. Compared to young men, young women are more likely simply to drop out of the labour force rather than being reported as unemployed. Also, young women are more likely to take up part-time work when full-time work opportunities are not available.

Pathways to decent work

Rather than look at participation in the labour market in terms of unemployment rates alone, it is useful to view the process of young people passing through several stages along the path to the goal of decent work. In many countries and for many young people, especially women, the pathways can be very difficult to negotiate, with many obstacles, setbacks, exits and reentries. Unfortunately, at the end of the process many young women do not find decent work.
The pathways to decent work available for young women are often inferior to those for young men. In most developed countries a typical young woman in her early twenties would be in the fortunate position of being able to choose between further education, training or employment, though there may be some gender-based limitations on her choices and on their outcomes. Her counterpart in many developing countries may not have these options. She may already be married, with one or more children, she may be illiterate or have left school many years ago, and she may be desperately looking for whatever work she can find so that she and her children can survive. She may find access to training and the formal labour market barred by tradition or restricted because of gender discrimination. While the situation varies a great deal from country-to-country, some of the obstacles to securing decent work faced by many young women in developing countries around the world are common problems.

### Common Problems in developing countries

- Many young women cannot read or write
- Labour force participation rates for young women are often much lower than those of their male counterparts
- Early marriage is the norm
- Young women are often mothers or already pregnant
- Many young women are afflicted by HIV/AIDS

### Expanding opportunities

Young women, especially in developing countries, are often unable to take advantage of training opportunities due to barriers to entry, discrimination in selection, and gender stereotyping. Such stereotyping is found in vocational guidance and counseling on the part of school staff or employment services, leading young women not to choose training programmes which would have otherwise led them to better long-term earnings and status. In many countries, for example, young women are encouraged to train in household-related work, such as food preparation, garment manufacturing, embroidery, etc., while young men are encouraged to go for high-skill and modern technology-based training and employment. As a result, most young women end up in relatively low-skilled and poorly-paid occupations with little prospect of upward mobility.

### What can policymakers do?

Youth employment will not grow unless there is economic growth accompanied by the expansion of employment opportunities. Again, unless youth employment in general is growing, it is unlikely that the employment prospects of young women will improve. At the same time, policymakers and planners need to develop gender-sensitive youth employment policies and programmes. They should tackle the specific obstacles young women face along the pathway to decent work. These barriers arise from gender differentials - and the resulting inability to benefit from - access to education and training. While better access would help to increase the employability of young women, it needs to be supplemented by vocational guidance better suited
to their capabilities and needs, as well as by gender-sensitive data collection and labour market information systems, and counselling and placement services to enable these young women to translate their aspirations into reality.

The Africa Region

From Beijing 95 to the year 2000

In recent years, evolving global economic trends, coupled with political instability, widespread armed conflict and growing poverty, have significantly affected African women's participation in the labour force and their contribution to the region's economic development. This poses a serious challenge to attempts to enhance the role and status of women in Africa, as enshrined in the Beijing Declaration of 1995.

Problems: Globalization and armed conflict

Globalization of the economy has shifted demand from the primary sectors to the service sectors, thereby reducing income opportunities for African producers, who mainly export primary goods. Moreover, Africa's labour force lacks the requisite resources and skills to compete effectively in today's globalized market. Structural adjustment programmes and debt servicing have resulted in a systematic reduction of social services and a decrease in the value of goods produced by women in the primary sector. While the African Continent as a whole has lagged behind in terms of economic development, it is the women who have been hardest hit because of historically stark inequities in economic and educational opportunities, and the provision of social services.

As a result, the vast majority of women in Africa continue to be engaged in subsistence agriculture just as they were prior to independence three decades ago. Also, while women's economic contribution to the household has increased in the past decades, only a relatively small percentage of women in Africa have been able to take advantage of new opportunities. However, far from being passive victims of economic change, women, by their economic behaviour, have often determined the very direction of economic transformation in their communities.

Aside from disrupting political and economic life, armed conflict in Africa has resulted in a deepening of poverty. An alarming development in the past decade is that most victims of these wars are women and children; the unarmed have become the targets of the armed forces. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that most of Africa's seven million refugees are women and their dependents. This worrisome state of affairs has had a further debilitating effect on social development, economic prospects and the quality of life. A lasting resolution of these crises is indispensable for Africa's development.

Changing gender roles

Although African societies are diverse in terms of social organization, there are certain characteristics which are shared by most of them. One of these is the complexity of gender roles. Traditionally, women play varied roles and have different status based on age, kinship and
affiliation. These determine and confer various levels of authority in different domains of the public and private spheres, as well as access to material and human resources.

In the last fifty years, some important changes have occurred. Women have played a significant role in the shift from a traditional subsistence economy to a more open, trade-dependent economy, which has transformed rural societies throughout the African Continent. In spite of this, while men's participation as labourers in the modern sectors is visible, women's role in the transformation of the traditional units of production within their communities remains largely invisible, as does their contribution to the modern economy.

An accurate assessment of women's position and status within the societies of the African Continent requires some understanding of the complexity and variety of their roles. Only then can interventions be targeted for optimum results.

- **Social Indicators**

Since 1995 overall levels of literacy in sub-Saharan Africa have risen from 40 to 50% on average. Female enrollment appears to have increased, although relatively few women are enrolled in institutions of higher learning. Infant mortality rates increased from an average of 96 to 104 per 1,000 births, while maternal mortality has remained fairly constant. The number of female-headed households, currently estimated at 25%, has risen notably in the past decade.

- **Labour force participation**

In sub-Saharan Africa more than 75% of working women operate in the agricultural sector, only about 3% operate in industry, and roughly 15% are in the services sector. In contrast, only 20% of women in North Africa may be found in the agricultural sector, while around 56% are in the services sector and 26% in industry. In most of Africa, few women participate in formal employment. Those engaged in formal employment are concentrated predominately in clerical positions in the public sector. The majority of women are self-employed in the primary productive sector or in the informal sector.

- **Institutional changes**

There is growing evidence in Africa of a strengthened political will to improve the status of women. An increasing number of governments have established ministries and mechanisms to address gender issues specifically and to integrate women's concerns in all aspects of political, economic and social development. Countries like Benin, Burkina Faso and Mali, have recently established a ministry of women's affairs. A significant proportion of African governments has ratified the conventions which bind them to the promotion of gender equality in the world of work. Moreover, workers and employers associations have created gender focal points to deal specifically with women's concerns.

**Major challenges**

- **Insufficient formal sector employment**
Women on the African Continent have the lowest levels of formal sector participation in the world. Those who are employed in the formal sector are under-represented in management posts. This may be attributed to a complex array of factors including inadequate access to skills training and formal education, discriminatory practices in the formal sector and sexual stereotyping of professions.

- **High levels of participation in agriculture and the informal sector**

The majority of African women are employed in the agriculture and informal sectors. Such employment is characterized by low returns to labour, low wages, and substandard working conditions.

- **Negative effects of global economic transformation**

Globalization of the economy and structural adjustment programmes have marginalized women workers and sharply curtailed access to social "safety nets".

- **Widespread armed conflict**

Armed conflict has affected large numbers of women and their dependents. In many areas of rural Africa, land mines have rendered vast farming areas unsafe. The destruction of infrastructure and the means of production threaten to impede human capital development for many generations.

- **The legal status of women**

African women are generally unaware of the legal instruments at their disposal. Modern law (the adoption of Dutch-Roman law) and an opportunistically simplified interpretation of women's status in traditional society have relegated women to the status of legal minors. Thus, access to productive resources such as credit and individually owned land, rights to assets independently of a spouse and to extend social benefits accruing from their employment to their dependents, are routinely denied them.

- **Growing feminization of poverty**

The subsistence-farming sector and the informal sector show the highest incidences of rural and urban poverty. Historically, inadequate investments have been made in both of these sectors by most governments. Female-headed households have higher incidences of poverty than male-headed households, and the number of female-headed households is growing because of the consequences of war and worker migration.

- **Inadequate institutional capacity to implement programmes**

Despite the political willingness to implement strategies to improve women's participation in the world of work, many constituents lack the technical skills and material resources to achieve their goals.
Lessons learned

Finally, the importance of collecting gender-disaggregated data (i.e., broken down by sex) and applying it systematically to the identification of a strategy specific to the region must be strongly emphasized. This is an essential ingredient for restoring the balance of opportunities for African women in the world of work.

Recommendations for future programmes

- **Develop capacity within the ILO as well as with constituents**
  
  There is an urgent need to develop capacity within the ILO offices in the region and provide more intensive training for team members. This will require the creation of more gender posts in the region.

- **More follow-up of successful programmes**
  
  Experience has shown that many of the ILO's gender-focused programmes have been very successful. However, once the initial stage of the project is completed, little is done to consolidate the gains and expand the programme's influence. It is, therefore, necessary to allocate the resources to follow-up these programmes.

- **More streamlining to regional and sub-regional specificities**
  
  A systematic analysis of the specificities of the constituents and their needs in the world of labour is required to write region specific guidelines and checklists.

- **More direct contact with decision-makers in the field**
  
  Experience has shown that there is a greater possibility for sustainability when decision-makers participate in the projects. All the successful projects had components which promoted dialogue between participants and decision-makers at all levels.

- **Liaising with development partners**
  
  It is important to place greater emphasis on liaising with development partners and to focus their attention on the manner in which gender and labour-related issues articulate with their goals.
The Arab Region

Making progress

The situation

Arab countries are at the same time cohesive and diverse. The great majority are linked by common language (Arabic), religion (Islam), and cultural identity and heritage. As a result, the region is perceived as a distinct entity. However, there is a marked variation between individual countries, with differences in terms of economic systems, income levels, styles of government and adherence to traditional norms across the region. For example, it includes oil-producing countries with the highest per capita in the world, such as Kuwait, Qatar and Saudi Arabia, as well as lower-income countries such as Yemen, Jordan and Syria. There are also vast differences in the employment structures and value systems, even within the same country. These diverse contexts have distinct effects on women's employment opportunities and working conditions across the region.

In the Gulf Region and Saudi Arabia, which are oil-producing and service-oriented economies, employment trends are characterized by the large number of foreign male and female workers. In recent years, however, as a result of global economic recession coupled with a decrease in oil prices, employment policies in those countries have focused on means of augmenting the number of national workers, especially in professional occupations. The impact which this will have on women's employment opportunities in those countries is yet to be seen.

As for the middle- and lower-income countries of the region, until recently employment trends could be characterized by male outward migration, specifically to oil-producing countries. This has caused a proliferation of female-headed households in labour exporting countries. Economic reform, and in some cases structural adjustment measures, are a more recent feature of these countries. As a result, many women are facing increasing poverty and unemployment levels, appearing to be more vulnerable to these forces. Downsizing the public sector in view of privatization has also adversely affected women since the public sector is the largest employer of women.

A significant feature of the region is women's low workforce participation rates and high fertility rates. Indeed, high population growth rates culminate in high annual growth rates of the labour force and an increasing number of young people seeking employment. In 1995, the annual growth rate of the labour force was the highest among the world's regions, at 2.9% compared to a world average of 1.7%.

Working women

The participation of Arab women in the labour force remains the lowest of any region in the world. Indeed, whereas in 1996, women composed 40% of the world labor force, the participation of Arab women in the Middle East and North Africa Region at the time did not exceed 26%. It is important to mention that Arab countries with lower GDP, income and
education levels, such as Yemen, seem to have higher female labour force participation than countries with higher levels, such as Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates.

Several relevant factors must be taken into account with regard to the apparently modest rates of economic activity among Arab women. First, statistics do not necessarily reflect reality, since many women are non-quantified family workers, especially in agriculture and in the informal sector. Second, despite lower rates of economic activity in the formal sector, there is evidence that women's labour force participation and conditions of work are undergoing some changes. One indication is that the rate of growth of female employment exceeds the rate of growth of male employment. Another is that a significant proportion of Arab working women in the formal sector are in professional and technical occupations, due to the substantial achievement in female education and training there. Indeed, the educational status of women at the tertiary levels more than doubled, from 7% in 1985 to 16% in 1995. Still another factor is the increasing age at marriage, making more young women available for employment.

Another issue is the rising female unemployment rates, which increased steadily from 1975 through 1995, from 13% to 21%, perhaps a result of the above factors. In general, women's unemployment is highest among economies undergoing restructuring and privatization. It is highest among first-time job seekers and those with high levels of education, a direct result of the growing size of the labour force as more young educated women are seeking employment. Unfortunately however, this does not seem to be coupled with increasing numbers of appropriate jobs in the labour market.

Between 60 and 70% of women are working in the services sector. This is because of the gender-based perceptions of women's traditional roles and abilities, and because they are encouraged to go into the teaching and clerical professions. The agricultural sector is second in concentration of women workers. In countries with an agricultural base, such as Yemen, women's participation was up to 88% in 1994. It is worth noting that the Arab Region differs in this regard from other regions, such as Asia, which experienced a significant growth in female employment as a result of rapid industrialization.

It important to note that the rate of women in managerial and professional occupations has increased from 11% in 1975 to 24% in 1995. This does not mean that women are facing less discrimination and barriers, rather it is a result of their high education levels. Indeed, women in professional occupations are usually employed in the middle- or lower-level jobs.

Arab women workers in the formal sector are mostly salaried employees. This ranges from 100% in Qatar to 46% in Syria. But they represent as little as 6% in Yemen. Self-employment consists mostly of women in semi-skilled or unskilled work, and home-based production. However, in many countries there is an increasing visibility of women-owned businesses. Indeed, some have been mobilizing and self-organizing through businesswomen's associations, women's committees within chambers of commerce, or just networking among themselves (in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Yemen). For both types of self-employment however, women face barriers ranging from difficulty in gaining access to assets and facilities, technical training, managerial know-how, information, credit, etc.
Factors influencing gender equality

Arab women no doubt also face, though to a different degree, an established pattern of thought, restrictive codes of behavior, and gender segregation which links family honor to female virtue. To a large extent, it is at the family level where decisions pertaining to education, training and type of employment are made. Therefore, family traditions may preclude women from working certain schedules, in certain occupations or locations, regardless of job opportunities and economic need.

As in other parts of the world, perceptions of women as secondary income earners and primary in their reproductive roles, influence to some extent private sector employers. Employers perceive women to have high turnover rates as a result of their family responsibilities and are hesitant to promote women or provide training opportunities. Recruitment practices display a high degree of occupational segregation based on both cultural norms in certain types of occupations, and the gender-typing of jobs, where women are relegated to certain occupations which are perceived suitable to their abilities or social roles. Wage differentials between men and women is another characteristic of employment in the region. It is often based on employers' perceptions of gender differences.

This vision of women as dependent and secondary income earners is also ingrained in state institutions and political processes. Based on such assumptions, family social welfare legislation denies women workers equal rights to coverage for their families. Women in many countries have struggled to own businesses, or to travel without permission and legal endorsement of fathers and husbands. According to family law in most countries of the region, women inherit less than men, and have no legal right to initiate divorce or maintain custody of children.

Regulatory and policy framework

Employment policies, and the regulatory and legislative framework which promote equality, are important elements in influencing traditions, family inhibitions and forms of discrimination based on perceptions of gender differences.

Most labour laws in the Arab countries are based on the principle of non-discrimination between the sexes. A considerable number of Arab countries have ratified the basic ILO Conventions regarding gender equality. Seven out of the ten countries have ratified the Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100), and eight have ratified the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111). In addition to ILO Conventions, political commitment toward gender equality has been demonstrated by the substantial number of countries in the region which have ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. Further political commitment is demonstrated by the number of countries in the region which set up institutional mechanisms for women's advancement after the Beijing Conference.

Arab women, however, are still not adequately represented at the decision-making level. Their contribution in political decision-making processes concerning labour policies is quite limited, which explains why many such policies are not gender-sensitive. In addition, the participation of Arab women at the decision making level of both trade unions and employers' organizations is quite limited.
A look ahead

Further efforts are needed to promote women's equality at work. In light of the established norms and perceptions toward women's roles, there is a pressing need for consciousness-raising and gender sensitization at all levels: among women themselves, their communities and policy- and decision-makers. Indeed, significant efforts by governments, employers' and workers' organizations are needed to integrate women further into economic and public life.

Despite the barriers and the efforts which are needed to promote equality, the position of Arab working women is improving. The institutional framework safeguarding women's rights at the national level exists in most countries of the region. For policy- and decision-makers, it is becoming increasingly difficult to ignore gender-equality issues, even if change is not yet perceptible. In general, women are more publicly visible and self-organizing in various spheres. There are increasing numbers of women's organizations focusing on equality issues. There are also more self-help organizations working on providing credit, training and entrepreneurship development. There is also the increasing visibility of successful businesswomen and the existence of some women in public office. And more and more young educated and professional Arab women are joining the labour force. Despite the difficulties that this young generation will face, many are able to realize their potential and are aware of their rights and ability to negotiate equality at work.

Central and Eastern Europe

A widening gap

The transition of the economies of Central and Eastern Europe from centrally planned to market-oriented has caused vast changes in the economic structure as well as in the political and social life in all of the countries of the region. Ten years down the road to transition and labour market restructuring, the three most pressing issues for women and gender relations in the world of work appear to be:

- Difficulties in securing employment and income in fluctuating labour markets
- Insufficient coverage and effectiveness of social protection and social services
- Inadequate participation of women in social dialogue and decision-making concerning the economic and political environment

However common characteristics between the countries, which were inherited from their communist past, have become less important as transition proceeds. Not only is the income gap widening between social groups and regions within a country, but there are quickly growing differences between countries and subregions which make it sometimes hard to speak of "one" region.
For example, several countries in the region, among others, are aiming their economic and social policy efforts exclusively at EU accession. Even among this group of countries, however, differences are sometimes quite large. Other countries face tremendous challenges, some even made worse by wars in the region during the past decade. Countries which formerly belonged to the Soviet are confronted with yet other, often even more problematic, situations with serious negative impact on the economic and social situation of their populations.

A changing labour market

Labour markets are one of the first and most important arenas of reform in the transition process. With the goal of a more efficient allocation of human resources, reduced costs and enhanced productivity, Central and Eastern European labour markets have become laboratories for still ongoing restructuring experiments, often with a different impact for men and women. Job losses and rising unemployment, skyrocketing in some countries and regions in the 1990s, and an increasingly unequal distribution of income caused by rising poverty, were immediate consequences of the restructuring process and the economic recession - and slow recovery - of the 1990s.

In many respects, however, both data and its interpretation are still insufficient to draw even preliminary conclusions about the long-term consequences of the ongoing processes. Reports from the region are therefore still too often based more on anecdotal evidence than comparable data. Variables which need to be studied more thoroughly in order to assess the gender dimension of labour market restructuring include: labour force participation rates, unemployment, underemployment and informal sector employment, job segregation, wage levels and gender-pay differentials, as well as unpaid family work and care provision, to name only the most important ones.

One characteristic of the former communist economies was the high participation of women in the labour force; in most countries of the region, about 50%. Their high participation rate in the past has been ascribed to the ideological push for women's involvement in economic and political life, to economic necessity and the need to provide for a decent family income. The economic, political and social systems were developed in such a way that women's presence in public life was assured. Successive socialist governments took a number of measures to ensure women's continued participation in the economic sphere. To achieve this goal, the socialist discourse on the role of women in society repeatedly employed arguments which appeared to be drawn from feminist theory (but in fact were only feminist in appearance). Thus, when socialism came to be discredited, this may have led to a somewhat discredited image of working women. Since the beginning of the transition, women's role as family care-takers has been emphasized also, and as a consequence, the women's movement has made little progress in transition countries. It clearly needs to be strengthened both inside and outside of political parties.

While much worry has been expressed about the decline in women's labour force participation during transition, it is still higher overall than in most industrialized countries in Western Europe. Now, ten years after the reforms began, it is becoming clear that although women have suffered more than men from job losses in some countries, this has not been the case everywhere. Instead, the extent to which job losses have affected women and men differently depends on the prior economic structure and job segregation, and on the changing gender connotations of jobs as their
responsibilities and pay change, and men move into formerly "female" jobs (and vice versa). Many women have also found an alternative to lack of full-time work by working part-time.

Thus, the extent to which women are pushed out of a tense labour market is not only influenced by the availability of jobs, but also by cultural values, and the gender division of labour, or, more broadly, gender relations in society. The interrelation of these factors is highly culture-specific, depending on intervening forces, such as the influence of the church, and varies strongly not only between countries, but even between regions and cultural groups within the same country. These interactions are difficult to assess, however, because labour markets are severely distressed, and unemployment and underemployment are very high in most countries of the region.

Decent employment, reasonable income

Throughout the region, unemployment is more often a problem for women than for men, with higher unemployment rates - in many cases consistently higher. Moreover, unemployed women are generally exposed to a greater risk of remaining unemployed for a longer time. Women are also very much affected by hidden unemployment and by work in the informal sector. Both are growing problems in the countries of the region, but gender-specific data and analysis are still lacking. As is also true in Western Europe, women are considerably less likely than men to be self-employed or to be employers, for reasons which are not always clear. However, since self-employment is often a form of hidden unemployment, and does not provide for decent income opportunities, an analysis beyond the collection of data is called for to determine where self-employment enhances people's opportunities and choices.

The gender segregation of employment inherited from communist times has generally been retained, and often reinforced, during transition. Women work overwhelmingly in certain fields such as textiles, office work, health and education, the public sector and services in general, and in low-paid positions of little authority. Women are very often paid less for equal work and work of equal value, but job evaluations would have to take place to grasp the extent of the problem and rectify such a bias. As a consequence, throughout most of the region women's income is lower than men's, and even well-qualified women find it difficult to secure a decent income through adequate employment.

In any case, women should be encouraged to opt for education in professions outside those traditionally considered as "suitable" for them. Women also need competitive skills, so they need to be given access to guidance to quality education and training for professions demanded by the labour market. And they should be encouraged to undergo retraining when necessary to enhance their ability to transfer skills where they are needed in a labour market in transition.

Social protection and social services

As mothers and heads of households, women often depend on social services and, all too often, insufficient income support through social protection schemes. Due to ideological shifts and budget constraints, Central and Eastern European states during transition have been moving away from assuming full responsibility for the social protection of their citizens. Subsidies and support infrastructure for the provision of social services, such as kindergartens and after-school care, etc., have been cut back, thus shifting the responsibility for social protection to the private sector.
and back to the family. As a result, social protection has become more precarious, and it has become more difficult for all employees to combine family, work, and social responsibilities. Where such changes have met with a traditional distribution of tasks and responsibilities between men and women, they have hit women harder than men by reinforcing the traditional division of labour. In addition, the setback in reproductive rights which has taken place throughout the region, has also tended to strengthen traditional gender roles.

During communism, social security schemes and mother- and child-welfare schemes were understood to be the road to guarantee women's presence in the workforce. Social policy was thus shaped in order to assist women in combining their maternal role with their responsibilities as employees. While enabling women to combine work with family responsibilities, communist social policy thus also served to reinforce traditional gender relations; i.e., women's traditional role in the home. In this way, gender inequalities and discrimination in employment were legitimized by state policies, at least to some extent.

One measure to facilitate women's continuous economic activity inherited from socialism is still alive; namely, child-care leave which is remunerated as either a flat rate or a percentage of previous wages. Existing schemes are still generous in terms of earnings replacement and length of time. Child-care leave was introduced in most countries in the 1960s as a remedy to the bad quality of child-care facilities and to the absenteeism by mothers of young children. There are certain important drawbacks to this policy, however. It tends to justify wage or promotion discrimination based on the argument that such career interruptions are costly to employers and might affect their attitudes toward training. Also, the normally lengthy period of such leave contributes to gender stereotypes of men as the breadwinner and women as the care provider. In the long run, therefore, child-care leave may have a negative effect on women's employment.

In times of more precarious social protection, there is even less leeway for changing traditional gender roles, and support networks of women in the family now often take over much of the unpaid reproductive and care work. In addition, tense labour markets nowadays can cause a situation where women cannot take advantage of existing benefits, such as maternity leave, for fear of otherwise endangering their employment situation.

Simultaneously, social insurance schemes have undergone major reforms, most of them still ongoing, in all countries of the region. The reforms of health insurance and pension systems, however, are taking place without sufficient attention to women's needs and to the woman-specific nature of their professional paths between family and wage labour. On the contrary, in discussions about pension reforms, women are even blamed for putting the pension system under strain, because of their longer life expectancy and lower pension age. At the same time, however, unemployed women just short of pension age, as well as elderly women, are highly over-represented among the lowest income groups and people living in poverty.

It is difficult to say what impact the new social protection systems under design in the region will have on gender relations. Yet it might well turn out that for women who often shift between family and career, the individual pension accounts now in vogue, and the weakening of the redistributive character of the pension systems, might not be the preferred option. Often enough, however, women's voices remain unheard.
Social dialogue and decision-making

Equality between men and women is legally guaranteed in all countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Despite the fact that discrimination is prohibited from a legal point of view, women face unequal treatment and marginalization in practice, not only in the labour market and social protection policy, but more broadly, at the decision-making level.

In the past, women's presence in public political life and the governing structures in political parties and other social organizations - often guaranteed through quotas - was without any real impact in many instances. With transition, however, women's presence has clearly decreased, so that the percentage of women in governing positions and parliaments in the region is now below the international average of about 20%. There is little indication that women's impact on political and economic decisions has been strengthened anywhere in the region.

Women are sidestepped not only at the government level. Among all the social partners, in trade unions and in employers' organizations, women are struggling to come out of a subordinate and marginal role. Thus, women's interests are not yet equally represented in social dialogue and decision-making relevant to the world of work. Questions of women worker's rights and needs are not often given a place on the agenda. And even more so in the case of discussions on the changes required to shift responsibilities and power between women and men in order to allow for gender equality. Collective bargaining agreements on any level, for example, hardly ever include issues of gender equality or women worker's special interests and needs.

A marginal position, however, might open up new opportunities for coalition-building. There is much scope for - at least partial - cooperation and productive dialogue between the people working for gender equality in governments, trade unions, employers' organizations, non-governmental organizations and academia. It is hoped that this will be the case. Only the future will show if such a hope is justified.

The Latin America Region

Narrowing the gaps

In Latin America, the presence of women in the workforce has been rising significantly and consistently over the last few decades. Between 1960 and 1990, the number of economically active women more than tripled, progressing from 18 to 57 million, whereas the comparable figure for men did not even manage to double, rising from 80 to 147 million. The long-term trend is one of rapid increases in the influx of women into the labour market, together with a slight decline in the rate for male workers. In this way, the gap between the sexes in terms of their respective share of the workforce will narrow.

Above and beyond this quantitative increase, a significant qualitative change is taking place in the model of women in the workforce, which points toward a reduction in the differences formerly observed between men's and women's activity patterns. This qualitative change is
creating an increasing divide between the reality of women's presence in the world of work and the image of women as a secondary workforce.

### Evidence of qualitative change

- Levels both of women's work activity and their unemployment are continuing to rise

- An increase in the number of hours devoted by women to paid work, as well as in the number of years of their economically active lives (between 1970 and 1990: an average of 9 years)

- Greater continuity in women's careers: there is a rise in the proportion of women who do not withdraw from the labour market for the purpose of bringing up children and remain economically active during the years with the highest incidence of child-bearing

- A rising percentage of women as heads of household; this varies between 25 and 35% in the different countries of the region. Moreover, there are households in which women's income input is equal to, or higher than, that of men, a fact which goes undetected both in population censuses and in household surveys, given the generally utilized definition of head of household. Similarly, in countries where men's conditions of employment have improved, no departure of women from the labour market has been observed as would, however, be the case if they actually constituted some secondary workforce

- A significant enhancement of the female workforce's level of education: women's average level of instruction is higher than that of men on the labour market, all of which challenges the idea of women having lower incomes due to a weaker educational background. In urban environments throughout Latin America in 1995, working women had an average of 9 years of education, whereas men had 8

Improved levels of education, combined with women's greater involvement in the workforce, have resulted in a major female presence in the professions and technical specializations; more than 50% in the urban zones of many countries of the region.

Despite higher education levels, however, women's wages remain significantly lower. In no Latin American country are men and women with the same educational background paid the same. Women's wages are generally lower than those of men whatever the relevant education levels, and the discrepancy widens as one climbs the educational ladder (the higher the level of education, the greater the wage gap between men and women).

Better education among the female workforce does, therefore, reflect a positive and a negative aspect with regard to their labour market status. Apart from testifying to a greater potential for skill acquisition, it also points to the greater obstacles encountered by women in their access to
employment; they require significantly higher educational credentials than men in order to reach
the same jobs or obtain the same incomes.

Salary differentials also indicate that the massive influx of women onto the labour market, as well
as the qualitative changes observed in their activity patterns, have not been accompanied by any
noteworthy decline in occupational inequalities between men and women. The majority of
women's jobs are still concentrated in certain sectors of activity and grouped in a small number of
occupations with a strong female presence. This compartmentalization remains at the heart of
existing inequalities (including that of remuneration) between men and women in the labour
market. There is still only modest access to jobs in the upper echelons of hierarchies for the
majority of women workers.

A greater participation of women in labour markets in Latin America has proved to be an
important factor enabling many families to overcome poverty. To the extent that the phenomenon
is defined on the basis of family per capita incomes, an increase in the number of wage-earners
per household can help to increase family income. According to certain estimates, approximately
one-third of the total income in urban households where both members of a couple go out to
work, is made up of the woman's earnings and, in one-fourth of two-parent households, the
woman contributes 50% or more of the total household income. Nevertheless, major differences
exist in women's labour market participation rates; it is specifically those from the poorest
households who have the greatest difficulty finding jobs (because of low levels of education,
skills and a lack of child-care support, for example and, hence, in making their contribution to
escaping from the poverty trap.

Women are also especially hit by the problems experienced by the majority of Latin American
economies in the generation of productive employment, as well as by the trend toward dwindling
quality of employment - also observed in the region, and reflected, among other indicators, in the
growing informal sector and job insecurity. They are over-represented in the urban and rural
informal sector, as well as in certain sections of the formal labour market where social protection
and security levels are more precarious (e.g., assembly work and rural seasonal work).

A breakdown of data regarding employment structures in 8 countries according to gender,
identifies a few trends emerging between 1990 and 1996.

**Surmounting the barriers**

At a time when there is growing acknowledgment in Latin America (particularly among ILO
constituents) of the importance of training and occupational skills as a key factor in raising
productivity and the competitive status of the economy, as well as in improving the quality of
employment, serious gender inequality survives with regard to access to apprenticeship and
vocational training opportunities.

In order to overcome these persistent, recurrent inequalities between men and women in the
world of work, it is vital for the goal of equality (and the elimination of a range of inequality-
generating discriminatory mechanisms) to be incorporated explicitly into the design,
implementation and evaluation of policies and programmes developed by the ILO and its
constituents - and especially those programmes directed at combating poverty, generating
employment and incomes and the provision of vocational training. This also presupposes the availability of improved gender-related statistics and indicators, as well as a more thorough analysis of a series of specific issues regarding the situation of working women and gender relations at work.

It is important to note that, during the course of the 1990s and, in particular, following the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, there has been growing concern on the part of governments and employers' and workers' organizations in the various countries of Latin America with regard to the implementation of programmes and policies to promote gender equity in the world of work. In an institutional context, major advances have also been registered, such as the creation and/or strengthening of government-sponsored offices for women's affairs, the elaboration of equality-of-opportunity programmes, the establishment of tripartite committees for the promotion of equality of opportunity in employment, and the setting up of specific departments by employers' and workers' organizations to deal with the issue. This constitutes a major challenge for the ILO, which must have the capacity to lend ever more effective and efficient support to the needs of its constituents.

**Emerging trends, 1990-96**

Women's unemployment rates are systematically higher than those for men in the countries of the region (8.5% for the entire workforce in 1998, 7.6% for men and 9.9% for women)

The shift of employment into the informal sector is more pronounced in the case of women. The percentage of women in informal jobs out of total women's employment is considerably higher than equivalent figures for the workforce as a whole. This difference became more marked over the first half of the decade (1)

The degree of insecurity of women's employment within the informal sector is more acute. On the one hand, the burden of domestic work is much greater for women; on the other, their presence in microenterprises (a subsector in which it is possible to find better quality jobs, more readily integrated into the formal sector) is fairly low, and increased very little, contrary to the trend observed among employed persons taken as a whole

1. In 1990, 59% of women employed in urban zones worked in the informal sector; in 1996, the figure rose to 65%. In respect of the total number of employed persons, the figures are, respectively, 50% and 53%. The ILO definition of "informal sector" encompasses domestic work, unskilled self-employed workers as well as wage-earners and owners of micro enterprises (enterprises with fewer than 5 or 10 workers, depending upon available data).
Russia and other CIS countries

A break with the past

Approximately half of the more than 200 million people in the ten countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are women. Their situation in these newly independent states may be characterized by some features derived from Soviet society. At the same time, however, women face a reality very different from the past, with noticeable regional differences in their status.

On the whole, at least two distinctively similar features describe the situation of women in the labour market in the CIS countries, following a decade of transition to a democratic society with a market-based economy. As a rule women's rights at the workplace are well addressed in legislation based on the principal ILO Conventions on working women. Nevertheless, due to ineffective law enforcement and insufficient national mechanisms, the laws on women are not adapted to the changed national realities. Nor are women's interests well pursued by those who affect the labour market in terms of appropriate employment opportunities and increasing unemployment. Combined with the dramatic decline in economic welfare in all the transition countries, these aspects have contributed to a decline in the labour market position of women.

In the Soviet period, women enjoyed equal rights which were legally enforced. A vivid embodiment of these rights is the fact that women have reached a high level of education. The Soviet pattern of the women's movement fostered both a high level of education and professional training of women along with their active participation in labour and public life. Even today, in Russia, for example, women in the labour market generally have a higher level of education than men, and they constitute more than 50% of university students. At the same time, the Soviet period was characterized by a blatant violation of women's rights in the form of their heavy load of maternity and household chores coupled with official employment and social activities.

After the collapse of the Soviet regime, the Russian Federation and other new independent CIS countries experienced changes in their political and economic structures, along with a revival of cultural, language and religious traditions. In addition, some of the countries have experienced civil war and violent conflicts over borders or territories. Most of the problems in the labour market are rooted in the economy of the socialist system. In fact, the economies of the Soviet Republics were completely integrated in Soviet state employment policy and economic infrastructure. The collapse of the Soviet system has highly aggravated the employment pressures in all CIS countries.

Women in the labour market

The situation of women regarding employment and social relations has been significantly influenced by the changes in the basic structures of their society. Therefore, generalizing basic trends and characteristics of the situation of almost 100 million women in the ten countries, must take into account the fact that even within a single CIS country, women may encounter totally
different problems in urban and rural areas. Nevertheless, there are some common features underlying the position of women in the labour market of most of the countries:

- **Unemployment**

One of the most acute problems encountered in the transition to the market economy is unemployment, especially the increasing unemployment among women. As a rule women generally constitute a majority of the officially registered unemployed. Registered unemployment figures, however, most often fail to reflect the real scale of the problem. Because of complicated registration procedures and very low unemployment allowances, a substantial number of unemployed are not registered.

Traditionally women are employed primarily in the public sector (health, social welfare, education, government, culture) and state-owned industries. As a rule during the first years of economic transformations and restructuring, employment of women has declined sharply due to the closure of state-owned enterprises and budget deficits in the social field. The level of women's employment in enterprise management has considerably decreased from the Soviet era, when over 60% of the engineers, economists and officials in management and administration were women.

- **National policy**

At the Government level, national policy and action plans regarding gender - in particularly regarding the situation of women in the labour market - either have not been developed or do not sufficiently address the actual situation. In particular, unplanned and unregulated changes in employment as a result of economic reforms have significantly influenced women's opportunities in the labour market. Discrimination in the labour market and in employment based on gender has also increased. As a rule women are paid 30% to 50% less than men for the very same work. In addition, late payments for the work or even non-payment have become more common during the past few years, worsening women's situation even more.

- **Representation in decision-making**

Despite the fact that working women in general are highly educated, their representation at economic and political decision-making levels is only marginal. Women tend to occupy the lowest ranks of the power structures within governments, trade unions and other institutions, concentrated primarily at the support staff level with only very few exceptions. Apparently, the "glass ceiling" exists in Russia as elsewhere, but the deteriorating economic situation has worsened women's access to better-paid and more influential jobs.

- **Statistics**

Current statistical data based on gender is inadequate in all of the CIS countries. A well-developed system of statistical data encompassing all spheres of life of men and women in society is nonexistent. This is usually due to a lack of the financial resources and knowledge required to develop gender statistics. In particular, sufficient statistical data on employment in the private sector - and especially on women engaged in the "shadow economy" or informal sector
activities - is lacking. This lack of sufficient statistical information limits opportunities to analyze adequately the actual situation in the labour market and thereby to address its specific features and its most vulnerable groups.

• Trade unions and collective bargaining

As a rule, national institutions for collective bargaining are not well-developed, due to the lack of effective associations of employers. Workers are represented by trade unions whose experience in bargaining procedures needs to be updated to take into account emerging market pressures including the new situation of women in the labour market. The collective agreements which have been concluded with enterprises contain provisions protecting the interests of women and individuals with families in the sphere of labour, but unfortunately they tend to remain only on paper. Inter-sectoral agreements are signed, though the range of sectors encompassed tends to remain insignificant.

• The informal sector

As a result of changes in economic structures and increasing unemployment, the shadow economy or the informal sector is strongly growing. The proportion of women occupied in the totally unregulated and illegal informal business sector is considerable (over 5 million in Russia) and their proportion is increasing. In the existing labour market environment women are often compelled to agree to terms and working conditions which are highly detrimental to both their rights and their health.

• Safety, working conditions and religion

Safety and working conditions remain among the most acute social problems in the CIS countries. The higher wage levels and early retirement in some sectors where the work is hazardous or onerous, is partly explained by the compensatory benefits paid for this type of work. This helps to explain why many women are engaged in hazardous industries, preferring these jobs for those reasons. The improvement of safety conditions in the workplace usually depends on updating existing labour legislation to take into account economic changes and to clarify the role of state labour inspection.

In addition to economic and political changes, the revival of old ethnic and cultural traditions and religion, mentioned previously, are also having an effect on the participation of women in the labour market. The influence of the church is growing (Islam in the Central Asian countries, Orthodox and Catholic churches in the Eastern European countries of the region), with their "traditional" views of women. There is an apparently increase in patriarchal relations in CIS society, which is reinforcing the traditional division of labour, with an influence on the lives of women; in particular, their rights and opportunities in the labour market.

The reasons
Transition to the market economy has profoundly changed the basic political and economic structures of most of the transition countries. An analysis of the situation of working women inevitably shows that, despite some positive indicators, they have been adversely impacted by the economic changes, as compared to men. The primary reasons for changes in the labour market, and the deteriorating situation of working women in particular, may be summarized as follows:

 Reasons for the changes

- Serious economic difficulties and decreased production
- Insufficient or non-existent national policy concerning the situation of women in the labour market, and no planned regulation of resulting changes in employment
- Insufficient national mechanisms governing discriminatory practices, and ineffective law enforcement
- Unprecedented growth of the unofficial "shadow economy" with involvement of an increasing proportion of women
- Increasing patriarchal relations in society together with reinforcement of traditional division of labour, gender-based discrimination in employment, and revival of cultural and religious traditions

Cooperation/progress

Following the Beijing Conference, many new forms of cooperation between women's organizations, state structures and international organizations have emerged and are gaining momentum. Several new women's organizations have been established, and the women's movement per se has been reinvigorated. At the national level, a number of standing commissions or state committees on women and family issues have been established. A legal framework addressing equal rights and opportunities for men and women is also being created in most of the ten CIS countries. It should be noted, however, that these activities are limited to only some of the countries. It is to be hoped that they will be expanded to the others.
South-East Asia and the Pacific

Progress but formidable challenges remain

South-East Asia and the Pacific (ILO/SEAPAT) is a diverse region in terms of the economic system and size, level of development, cultural background and history of the various countries it comprises. These factors have respectively influenced on women workers in societies, economies and labour markets. Asia still largely holds the traditional view that women's primary role is to be mothers and wives, and that men's is to work and be the breadwinners. With women's increasing levels of education, economic development and a demographic change, however, a larger number of them have joined the labour market, and relations between men and women have been undergoing a steady, concurrent change. Women enjoy more equality at work in some countries than others. Similarly, various economic forces, such as liberalization, economic restructuring in an increasing overall globalization, and the recent Asian financial and economic crises have also deeply affected the socioeconomic well-being and employment patterns of millions of women and men in the region in recent years. Despite some progress made during the last 10 years, a large majority of women workers in Asia and the Pacific continue to work in the informal and rural sectors, in jobs with lower remuneration, lower job security, and more in atypical forms of employment compared to men.

Labour force participation

Labour force participation of women in the region ranges from 26 percent to 83 percent. A recent ILO study on the overall trends in changing labour force participation shows that economic factors, as well as policy measures are having an impact on the labour market. The graph below shows the changes in the gender differentials of Labour Force Participation Rates (LFPRs) between 1980 and 1990, and, where possible, for 1990-97, from an individualized growth perspective. It lists the countries according to their growth during the last 15 years. China was the star performer, followed by the Republic of Korea and Thailand.

Gender-gap changes are different when the countries are ranked by individual performance, as indicated in the graph. While the Chinese and Vietnamese economies score reasonably well in those terms, despite the transitions they have experienced, several high-growth economies, such as Thailand, Malaysia, Hong Kong and China, did not advance as much as expected. Sri Lanka, despite comparatively low growth of its economy, significantly narrowed gender gaps in LFPRs, presumably because of the policy measures it took earlier. There is a striking difference between India, whose economy grew a little faster, and Sri Lanka where a widening of the gender gap in LFPRs occurred between 1980 and 1990. On the other hand, Australia and New Zealand closed gaps in LFPRs, at a time when their economies were sluggish because of their policies in favour of women, which started in the late 1960s and bore fruit during the 1980s - but less so in the 1990s. The study found that economic factors can complement or reinforce social factors, either reducing or increasing gender differentials.

Employment and underemployment


In the developing part of the region, a large majority of women are working in the urban informal or rural sector. In the early 1990s, the levels of informal sector employment as a percentage of total employment in the urban sector varied between two-thirds in Pakistan and 10 percent in Bangladesh. There are also high levels of underemployment of women in terms of hours worked. Generally, women tend to be more underemployed than men. Women are also found in homework, and their share of part-time employment is overwhelming, showing that women's employment is constrained by their household responsibilities and the resulting limited time available for remunerative work. A critical form of women's work, is unpaid work, since it is generally unaccounted for in the economy. It consists largely of household and voluntary work, is not normally reflected in the System of National Accounts, and is thus excluded from the GDP. Furthermore, women are also found increasingly in atypical employment.

**Atypical employment**

- **Migrant workers**

**General Trends**

An increasing number of women depart their home countries in search of jobs abroad, and most of them are found in such gender-stereotypical jobs as domestic work or in the "entertainment" industry. The statistics show that in some countries many - and in others most - migrant workers are employed under irregular conditions. An important reason for the extraordinarily high proportions is that in migrant-exporting countries, the core institution concerned - the state - may limit itself to prescribing and supervising formalities and migration channels.

At the time of the Beijing Conference, the total number of migrant workers in Asia was some 6 million. Although data collection systems on migration do not disaggregate (i.e., break down) figures by sex, it is estimated that 1.5 million of these workers were women. Women have begun to redress the gender imbalance by dominating the authorized outflows from sending countries such as Indonesia, the Philippines and Sri Lanka.

Migration can be personally empowering for women, but can also have the opposite effect due to the command over their lives by others. And while most of the time economic benefits are derived, families - most of all the children - often suffer from the absence of the father or mother.

**Vulnerable occupations**

Labour migration occurs because there is an economic demand for services. That demand is institutionally controlled and shaped by society's "gatekeepers", who reflect economic interests and social or political concerns, and sometimes personal preferences. Wherever economic growth is strong and lasting, certain jobs are progressively shunned by all nationals except the very poorest ("SALEP" jobs). If migrants in general are concentrated in such jobs, migrant women are concentrated in the most vulnerable of them.

Women migrants employed as household workers are subject to abuse and exploitation; even violence. Household work, even when undertaken in accordance with migration and recruitment regulations, is not covered by the labour laws of most countries. Moreover, domestic workers are
isolated, sometimes forbidden to leave the household, and routinely have their passports withdrawn by employers or intermediaries, thus opening up means for pressuring them into submission. Fortunately, domestic workers weathered the Asian financial crisis much better than most other migrants.

The kind of work they do, and at low cost, makes household owners think twice before dismissing them. Migrants working in the sex sector are most often women, and whether they are in a regular or irregular situation, they are the most vulnerable of all. The number of migrants employed in this sector is significant; other service workers and operators in manufacturing constitute a much smaller group.

- **Working girls**

More than three out of five of the world's working children are found in Asian developing countries - 153 million, and 46 percent are girls. If household work were fully taken into account, the number of working girls would be still higher. The Asian crisis starting in mid-1997 is generally believed to have pushed more girls and boys out of school and into work. Poverty is the cause of child labour, and it is thought that it disappears as incomes rise. In Asian low- and middle-income countries, however, this is not really supported by recent data, which suggests that, as with the elimination of gender inequalities of adults, more than economic growth is required to eliminate it.

Most girls (and boys) work in agriculture, fishing and forestry. Depending on the extent to which boys are favoured when it comes to schooling and the prevailing sexual division of labour, girls may outnumber boys in agriculture and in services. Girls are highly vulnerable to physical or emotional harassment and abuse, particularly where they are led into commercial sex work or work in private households. Working children miss school and training. Thereby, they tend to have low productivity jobs and are destined to remain in that type of work in the future, their families will have low incomes, and their countries will be relegated to the bottom rungs of the international division of labour.

- **Human trafficking**

The trafficking of women, as well as boys and girls, is a phenomenon in many parts of the world. The trafficking pattern is linked to perceived income disparity among countries. Thailand is the main receiving country for trafficked women and children from poorer surrounding countries, with Thai and Filipino women trafficked to high-income countries or territories both inside and outside of Asia. South Asia, India and Pakistan are the main receiving countries from others in the subregion. Some women are trafficked onwards to the Middle East. Selectivity in terms of age and location of origin is a striking feature of this practice. Teenagers are supplied to the commercial sex industry or private households, and very young children are made to beg or solicit. The costs of trafficking are high for its victims and their communities in terms of health, as well as physical and psychological abuse.

**The gender dimension of poverty**

- **Women's poverty - the causes**
Poverty tends to afflict women more than men. There is a direct relationship between the prevalence of the agricultural sector and the incidence of poverty; the higher the sectoral share of agriculture in total employment, the more pronounced the poverty, and mostly in agriculture itself. Since women are over-represented in agriculture and related activities, where average income and wage levels are lowest, women are disproportionately affected by poverty. As for agriculture, so for the informal sector. Low-income activities predominate and, as a whole, make the informal sector straddle the poverty line. Many women seek refuge in informal sector activities, but most of them are scarcely able to satisfy their personal needs and those of their children. Unemployment, too, generally afflicts women disproportionately and makes them less well-off than men in the developing countries of Asia and the Pacific.

In some countries, the gender dimension of poverty can also be gauged by the incidence of woman-headed households. While they are not worse off than other households in all cases, in countries where poverty is widespread they are at a disadvantage. Women have less access to employment and income opportunities, since they tend to be less mobile than men and have less access to productive assets and resources. Female-headed households are also more likely to suffer when structural adjustment or other economic reforms are carried out and the governments' social expenditures are cut back.

**The financial crisis - its impact on women**

Quantitative assessments of the impact of the Asian crisis on women's labour force participation, unemployment and incomes, indicate an unambiguous worsening in some countries, with mixed results in others. Different countries seem to show varied results in the formal sector. But, except for Korea, where there seems to have been discouraged women workers, women's participation rates have gone up (for example in the Philippines and Indonesia), indicating that women have increased their level of economic activity while earning less or the same as before. In general, the Asian crisis brought hardship to many women due to the high rate of inflation and the market decline, causing the poorer populations in particular to fall further down on the poverty scale. Particularly hard hit have been women agricultural labourers, homeworkers, traditional artisans, weavers, and vendors.

**Summing up**

**Women in Asia and the Pacific**

- Women's jobs are mostly low-skill, low-pay, low-quality, in a limited range of sectors and occupations at the lower rungs of the job ladder
- Quality and levels of employment are linked to their levels of poverty
- Women are more unemployed and underemployed than men, and more often in atypical forms of employment
- In many of the countries they are the majority in rural and informal sector employment
• In some countries, women have greater access to training and employment, increased economic autonomy and social status-narrowing gender gaps

• Flexible employment provides opportunities for men and women, but few women can combine paid work with family responsibilities

• Globalization tends to foster deregulation, downsizing, outsourcing, informal sector and part-time or homework arrangements, all of which tend to stay beyond the reach of labour legislation and social protection

• Globalization has disproportionately increased the number of women working abroad in precarious, vulnerable and exploitative jobs, without social security.

In the recent Asian financial crisis, gender-based discrimination in retrenchment has also become a major issue, and while women have been resilient in earning extra income in order to provide for the basic needs of their families, it means their diminishing income is being overstretched in the overall economic downturn. Furthermore, worrying forms of employment have come to the fore, such as child labour and trafficking in women and children. The debate remains, however, whether the social sanctions against women in the labour market can be lifted by specific social policies and measures which can protect women or promote gender equality at work, in tandem with the overall economic policies and long-term growth in general.

Further Readings & Internet Links

Approaching gender issues


Gender issues in....

Child Labour


**Collective bargaining**


**Cooperatives**


ICA Internet Website: [http://www.coop.org](http://www.coop.org)

**Education and Training**


**Africa -- English-speaking**


Africa -- French-speaking


Americas


Asia and the Pacific


Arab States


**Employers' Activities**


**Export-Processing Zones**


Gender Impacts of Armed Conflict


Globalization


http://www.europa.eu.int


**Health Services**


**Homeworkers in the global economy**


Discussion papers in Spanish are available on homework in Paraguay, Argentina, Peru, and Chile.

**Human Resources**


Indigenous and tribal cultures


Informal sector


ILO. *A Thematic Evaluation of the Urban Informal Sector: ILO Actions and Perspectives; by Evaluation Unit (PROG/EVAL)* (Geneva, ILO, in finalisation)


Maternity Protection


**Microfinance**

For a complete list of publications from the Social Finance Unit, go to:


**Migrant Women**


Occupational Safety and Health


Part-time work


OECD. *The definition of part-time work for the purpose of international comparisons,* OECD working papers, labour market and social policy occasional papers, No. 22. Paris, 1997.


Poverty


**Productivity**


**Public Services**


**Sex Segregation**


**Sexual Harassment**


**Small Enterprise Development**


**Social Funds**


**Social Protection**


**Statistics**


**Trade Unions**


**Violence**


**Vocational Training**


**Women in Management**


**Women with Disabilities**


**Women's Rights**


**Women's transition to retirement**


**Youth**


ILO. *Web Page on Youth Employment*:  

**General Readings**


For further bibliographic information available in the ILO, please contact the ILO Library and ILO Information Services Site Map: H http://www.ilo.org/public/english/support/lib/sitemap.htm
Useful ILO Internet Links

Department Home Pages

This list provides hyperlinks to ILO departments and Field Offices who are maintaining Home Pages. This list will continue to be updated as new department and offices develop their sites.

Pages d'accueil des départements

Cette liste fournit des hyperliens aux départements du BIT et aux bureaux extérieurs qui ont des Pages d'accueil. Cette liste continuera d'être mise à jour.

Paginas de acceso por departamentos

Esta lista proporciona enlaces con los departamentos de la OIT y las oficinas externas que mantienen páginas de acceso. Se actualizará permanentemente a medida que nuevos departamentos y oficinas creen sus propios sitios.