

Chapter 9. Sex-specific labour market indicators

Introduction

Assessments of gender-sensitive statistics generally identify women's participation in economic activity as one of the least reliable indicators of women's absolute contribution to socio-economic development. The Beijing Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women called on national, regional and international statistical services and relevant governmental and United Nations agencies, in cooperation with research and documentation organizations, to "improve data collection on the full contribution of women and men to the economy, including their participation in the informal sector"; "develop a more comprehensive knowledge of all forms of work and employment"; and "develop an international classification of activities for time-use statistics that is sensitive to the differences between women and men in remunerated and unremunerated work".¹

Many of the actions required to implement the comprehensive mandate on gender statistics put forth by the Beijing Conference are currently under way. A review of progress in gender-sensitive data shows that "considerable work has been done and advances made in ways of presenting gender statistics effectively ... Much remains to be done, however, to provide the statistics necessary to understand what is happening with respect to the main issues related to gender."²

This chapter will first summarize what we now know, that is, what can be said about gender-specific labour market trends given the current availability of statistics, and also what we cannot tell from the current statistics. (Some gender perspectives have already been highlighted earlier, including definitional and measurement issues by sex for specific labour market indicators.) The second purpose of this chapter is to identify and briefly discuss what other kinds of data would be useful to inform and guide the formulation of effective and gender-sensitive employment and labour market policies and programmes.

I. Highlights of labour market indicators by sex

In every country for which statistics are available, the *labour force participation rate* (KILM 1) by sex and age group shows that in each age category women are less likely than men to be economically active. Part of this sex differential can be attributed to the underestimation of women's work – because "national labour statistics have

generally been successful at identifying and characterizing 'core' employment and unemployment situations, which reflect the conventional view of what 'work' and 'joblessness' are all about: i.e. workers in full-time regular employment in formal sector enterprises and persons who are looking for such jobs. They have been less successful at identifying and describing other work situations. Women are often to be found in these other work situations which may go unnoticed or be inadequately described in labour statistics."³

In the 1980s, the overall pattern was one of rising female and falling male shares of the labour force, so that the sex differential narrowed. In the 1990s, the female labour force participation rate continued to rise in most of the developed (industrialized) economies and Latin America and the Caribbean. In most of the countries in Asia, there was a narrowing of the gap in labour force participation rates by sex between 1980 and 1990. But in the 1990s, especially in the second half of the decade, the impact of the financial crisis and economic downturns, especially in Indonesia, Mongolia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea and Thailand, appears to have hit women harder than men in terms of falling labour force participation rates, although Indonesia and the Philippines showed signs of recovery of former female participation rates by 1999 (see figure A). In the transition economies and sub-Saharan Africa, labour force participation rates have been declining for both men and women, often to levels lower than in 1980.

The profiles of male and female labour force participation rates by age group show specific patterns. The male profile, irrespective of region, generally has an inverted U-shape, with participation peaking in the prime ages of 25-54 years and declining at older ages.⁴ Women enter and remain in the labour force (although at a lower rate than men for each age group) until well beyond their childbearing years. In developed (industrialized) economies, a double peak pattern of female labour force participation used to be common – women entered the labour force in their twenties, left after a few years to bear and raise children and re-entered, but at a lower rate, as the children grew up. Since the 1990s, however, particularly in the developed (industrialized) economies, women are remaining in the labour force throughout the reproductive years, so that a pattern of uninterrupted economic activity has come to resemble that of men. At the level of individual economies, however, significant variations in the rates and patterns of male and female participation are evident, reflecting socio-cultural attitudes as well as differences in family-friendly policies and programmes and the supports available to women and

¹ UN: *Platform for action and the Beijing Declaration*, Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, China, 4-15 September 1995, DPI/1766/Wom. (New York, 1996), paras. 206 (e), (f) and (g).

² UN: *The world's women 2000: Trends and statistics*, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/16 (New York, 2000). Website:

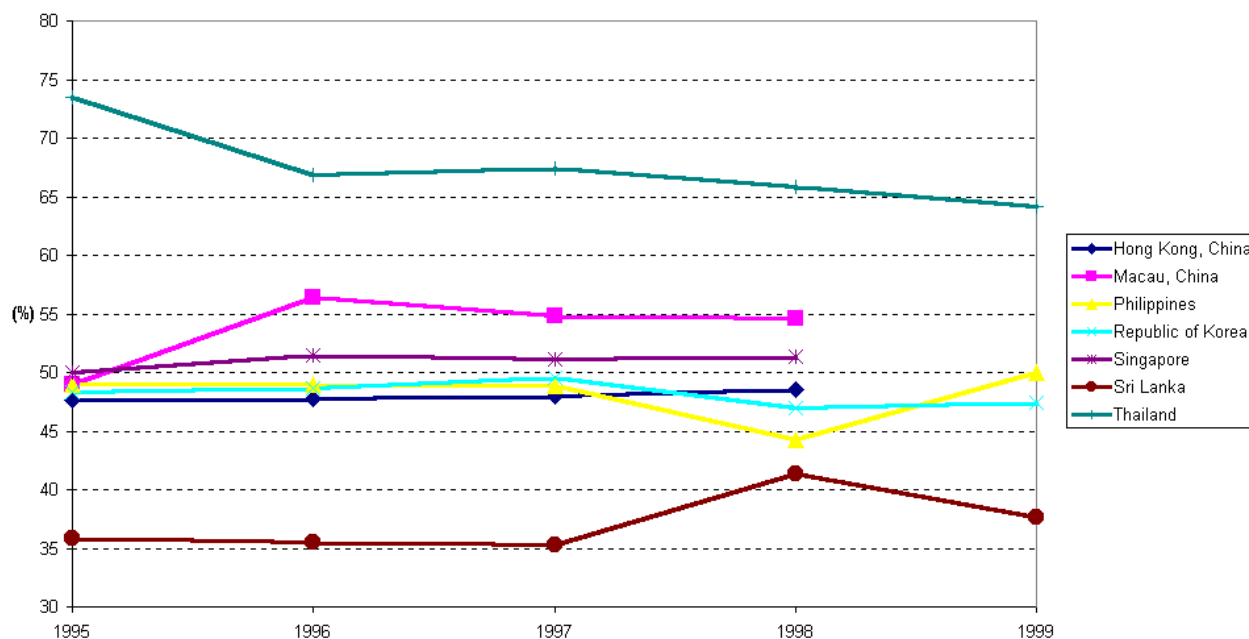
<http://www.un.org/Depts/unsd/ww2000/index.htm>.

³ A. Mata Greenwood: "Gender issues in labour statistics", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. 138, No. 3 (Geneva, 1999), p.273.

⁴ Readers may wish to consult the 1999 edition of KILM, Chapter 1, figs. 1f and 1g, p. 23.

men to enable them to balance work and family responsibilities (see figure B).

Figure A. Female labour force participation rates, selected economies in Asia, 1995-99



Note: Annual data are available on the KILM CD-ROM and Internet site.

The trend of rising female and falling male labour market activity is also evident in another indicator – the *employment-to-population ratio* (KILM 2). In the economies with fairly continuous statistics since 1990, nearly all had decreasing employment-to-population ratios for men; while many, but by no means all, had rising ratios for women.⁵ The sex differentials are smallest in the developed (industrialized) economies, in Scandinavia in particular; whereas they remain large in many Latin American and Caribbean economies. KILM 2 is commonly used to show the relative involvement of women and men in productive labour market activities. However, it is important to emphasize that this indicator has a gender bias in so far as there is a tendency to undercount women who do not consider their work as “employment” or are not perceived by others as “working”. Women are also more likely than men to not work at all during the reference period for which data were collected, for example because they are on extended maternity leave.

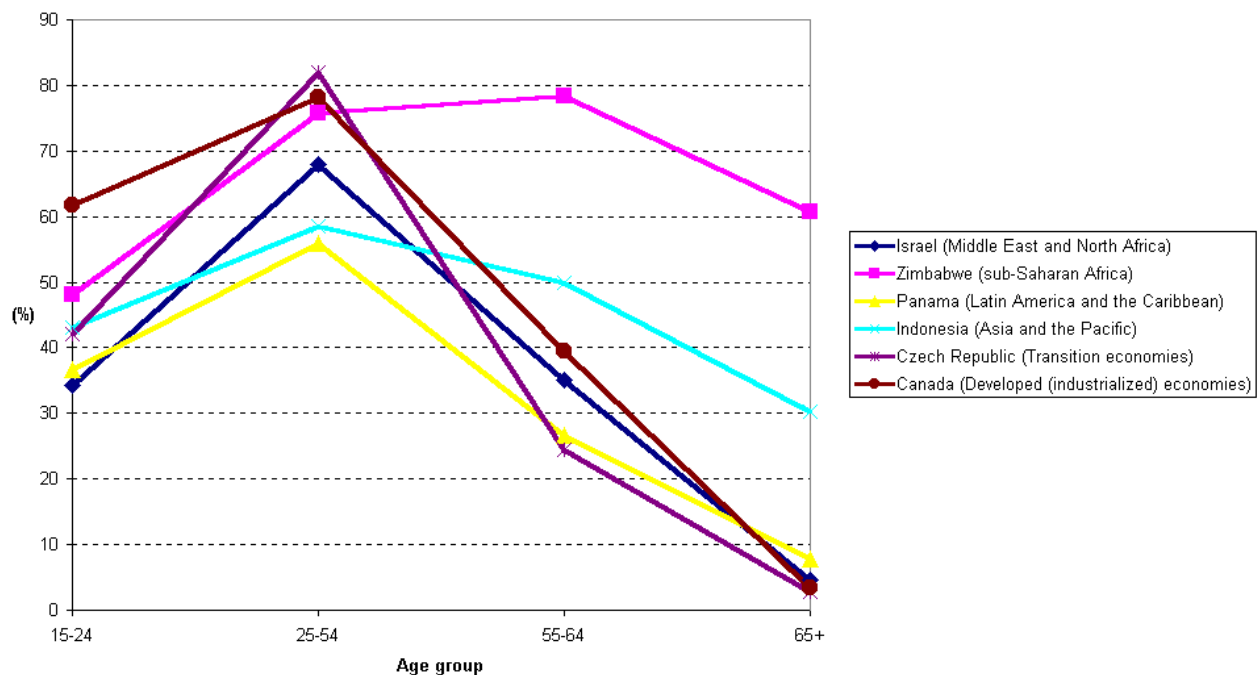
Indicators of *status in employment* (KILM 3) reveal that: (a) employees (wage and salaried workers) account for the largest category of both the male and female labour force; (b) men are more likely than women to be self-employed, either as employers, own-account workers or members of cooperatives (but there is a trend of growing self-employment outside the agricultural sector among women); and (c) women are much more likely than men to be contributing family workers who are unpaid.

While paid employment is the main status for both men and women workers, except in sub-Saharan Africa (excluding southern Africa) and South-central Asia, the proportion who are employees is higher for the female than the male labour force in the developed (industrialized) economies (with the exception of Japan), the Caribbean, Central America and East Asia. But paid employment is a heterogeneous category and available data tend to show that men are normally in “core” or regular and better remunerated positions, whereas women are often in peripheral, insecure, less valued jobs, as homeworkers, casual workers, or temporary workers. In self-employment, proportionately more men than women are employers; women are more likely to be own-account workers and in the informal sector – especially in those countries where wage jobs have been limited or have declined. In the category of contributing family workers, women clearly predominate; although there are large differentials at regional and national levels. For example, according to the available statistics, the percentage of contributing family workers among economically active women is over 77 per cent in Bangladesh (1996), 60 per cent in Ethiopia (1999), 54 per cent in Uganda (1994) and 40 per cent in Thailand (1999), but less than 5 per cent in the countries of the Caribbean and most of the countries of Latin America. Among men, the percentage in the unpaid family worker status is generally single-digit; although there are some notable exceptions such as in Benin (32 per cent, 1992), Ethiopia (24 per cent, 1999), Kenya (30 per cent, 1994) and Thailand (17 per cent, 1999).

For both women and men and in almost all countries, the main source of *employment by sector* (KILM 4) is services, but the concentration of women is higher – by

⁵ S. Elder and L.J. Johnson: “Sex-specific labour market indicators: What they show”, in *International Labour Review*, Vol. 138, No. 4 (Geneva, 1999), pp. 452-53.

Figure B. Female labour force participation rates by age group, selected economies, 1999



about 20 percentage points and even over 30 percentage points in some economies. Employment in the industrial sector has a higher proportion of men. Employment in the agricultural sector differs by region – in general, developed (industrialized) economies and the transition economies have higher proportions of men than women, whereas sub-Saharan Africa and Asia and the Pacific have more women than men.

The more revealing information is at the 1-digit sector level (tables 4b and 4c). These tables clearly show that women are predominant in retail trade and hotel and restaurant services and especially in community, social and personal services that are traditionally associated with their gender roles. Domestic service is almost exclusively female and there are also higher proportions of women than men in health, education and social services. On the other hand, better paying service-sector jobs – in financial services, real estate and business services and public administration – are dominated by men. Within the industrial sector, too, there are gender differences. Women are almost exclusively in manufacturing, which is also the most important industrial sector for men. But relatively large proportions of men are also in construction, and men dominate employment in the mining and quarrying and utilities industries.

The 1-digit sector level employment information also reveals geographical differences by gender. In western Europe, the main type of service-sector employment and, in fact, the main source of employment for women is health and social work, whereas the most important sector for men is manufacturing. In the transition economies, however, manufacturing represents the single most important sector of employment for both women and men. In Latin America and the Caribbean, women in services are most likely to be domestic workers in private

households whereas men in services are most likely to be in wholesale and retail trades.

An important reason why women are concentrated in specific types of service is the greater flexibility allowing them to combine work and family responsibilities. Another increasingly significant way in which women are attempting to balance their economic activity and domestic roles is to work less than full time. *Part-time work* (KILM 5) is very much a female domain; in the economies for which statistics are available well over half, if not over two-thirds, of all part-time workers are women. Part-time work is especially common for women in the developed (industrialized) economies, especially in major Europe. In the 1990s, the share of part-time to total employment has been rising in most of the developed (industrialized) economies but falling in several Latin American and Caribbean economies for both men and women. But what is disturbing is that part-time work for women appears to be increasingly involuntary. Growing numbers of women are working shorter hours than they want and are available to work more hours; this is reflected partly by the time-related underemployment indicator (discussed below).

The *hours of work* (KILM 6) indicator shows that in all economies women work fewer hours than men. These gender differences as indicated by official statistics may be attributed to the fact that men tend to be in jobs that involve longer work weeks or because women with family responsibilities are not able to devote as many hours as men to paid employment. The differences in short hours worked between women and men tend to be greatest in developed (industrialized) economies – of up to 20 percentage points among those working less than 20 hours per week. However, the information for the 1990s shows that in countries such as Sweden and the United

Kingdom the share of women working more than 40 hours a week increased while that of men decreased or remained more or less unchanged. While in the developed (industrialized) economies the trend appears to be towards shorter working hours over time, in almost all developing economies it is towards longer working hours for both women and men.

Women spend less time on paid work but considerably more time on unpaid work than men. Recent time-use surveys conducted between 1995 and 1999 show that women's total time worked exceeded men's by two hours or more per week in Australia, France, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Latvia, and by less than an hour in the Netherlands and New Zealand. Women spend 50 to 70 per cent of the time men spend on paid work, but almost twice as much time or more as men on unpaid work.⁶

To have a more complete measure of total work in the economy, statistics on employment in the informal sector are crucial. Measurement of the informal sector is arduous and fraught with definitional and conceptual difficulties, as discussed in Section II of this chapter. But where information has been collected, it shows that in practically all Asian and African economies the share of *informal sector employment* (KILM 7) in total employment is greater for women than for men. The informal sector accounts for approximately eight out of every ten females working outside agriculture in Gambia, Pakistan and the United Republic of Tanzania. Even then, there is likely to be underestimation of the gender bias in the informal sector. Women are more likely than men to be in those activities that are excluded from the measurement of the informal sector – such as production for own consumption, paid domestic activities in private households, and homeworkers in paid employment jobs. Also, women are more likely than men to be in small-scale economic units where their economic contributions are invisible or are not counted.

Unemployment (KILM 8) information is especially inadequate for reflecting the labour market situation of men and particularly of women in developing economies. Many national definitions of unemployment exclude persons who want to work but do not actively “seek” work either because job opportunities are extremely limited, or because such persons have restricted labour mobility, or face discrimination or structural, social or cultural barriers. The majority of persons in this category are women. Based on the proportion of the labour force that does not have a job but is available and actively looking for work, the unemployment rate has almost always been higher for women than for men. In recent years, however, there have been some notable exceptions – the unemployment rate has been lower for women than for men in the Baltic States, in parts of East Asia and in developed (industrialized) economies such as Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and the United Kingdom. However, caution should be exercised in interpreting a trend of falling unemployment for women, since KILM 8

seen in conjunction with, for example, KILM 13 (showing the inactivity rate) and KILM 12 (showing time-related underemployment) could indicate that women may be adjusting to deteriorating economic conditions by opting out of the labour market altogether or by accepting shorter working hours rather than no work at all.

Youth unemployment (KILM 9) rates for both sexes are more than twice the corresponding rates for the economically active adult population in all regions of the world. But the unemployment rate is usually higher for young women than for young men (with some notable exceptions, such as Hong Kong (China), the Republic of Korea, Puerto Rico and the United Kingdom), and, additionally, the ratio of the youth unemployment rate to the adult unemployment rate is smaller for young women than for young men. Therefore, being female and being young represent a double source of discrimination – young women appear to have the greatest difficulty in entering the labour market and retaining their jobs in periods of economic downturn, particularly in Latin America and the Caribbean and South Asia. From a dynamic perspective, the situation for young women does not seem to have improved in countries such as Brazil, Costa Rica, Latvia, the Netherlands, Suriname and Venezuela, where the gender gap in youth unemployment rates has increased (see figure 9b in Chapter 3).

In general, women, particularly those with low levels of education and who are older, are at greater risk of losing their jobs, and face great difficulties entering or re-entering the labour force. But official statistics on *long-term unemployment* (KILM 10) do not show significant differentials nor clear patterns by sex. This is mainly because men account for larger shares of total unemployment and of the labour force than women, with the result that differences in unemployment for a year or longer by sex are frequently not large. Also, women are much more likely than men to become discouraged and to stop actively seeking employment. In the majority of developed (industrialized) economies in Europe with available information and also in all the Caribbean economies, the long-term unemployment rates are higher for women than men. On the other hand, all five developed (industrialized) economies outside Europe (Australia, Canada, Japan, New Zealand and the United States) showed lower female than male long-term unemployment rates. It is interesting to note that on occasion one may find a lower long-term unemployment rate for women than for men, while the corresponding share of being without a job for a year or longer (long-term unemployment as a percentage of total unemployment) is higher for the female than male unemployed (see Bulgaria).

The *unemployment by educational attainment* indicator (KILM 11) shows that some of the gender differences in unemployment can be directly attributed to gender differences in education. Unemployment rates tend to decline with higher educational attainment, and women generally have lower levels of education than men (see KILM 14). Nevertheless, KILM 11 shows that at similar levels of education, the unemployment rate differs by sex.

⁶ UN: *The world's women 2000 ...*, op cit., p. 126.

Among workers with primary education, the unemployment rate tends to be higher for men in almost all economies of the world, but among those with secondary and especially tertiary education, women are more likely to be unemployed than men. Conversely, as revealed by table 14a, among those actually in the labour force, women are more likely than men to be educated to the tertiary level.

Just as women are less likely than men to actively seek jobs, they are also less likely to look for additional work even when they actually want it. An indicator that covered only those who reported that they sought to work additional hours would be likely to show smaller numbers of women relative to men. Alternatively, the *time-related underemployment* indicator (KILM 12) – which includes not only persons who were available and seeking to work additional hours but also persons whose hours of work were below a certain cut-off point and reported involuntary reasons for working fewer than full-time hours – shows that women's rates tend to be several percentage points higher than men's. In fact, the proportion of the female labour force underemployed was at least treble the proportion of the male labour force in Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Israel, Italy, Norway, Spain and Sweden. In most economies where information is available, time-related underemployment has been growing in recent years, and women are more severely affected. For instance, involuntary part-time work for women has been increasing.

Women between 25 and 54 years of age, as compared to their male counterparts, are also more likely not to be in the labour force. Women's *inactivity rates* (KILM 13) exceed men's in all the economies covered in the indicator. Worldwide, men's inactivity rates are likely to be less than 10 per cent, whereas women's inactivity rates can be over 70 per cent in some economies in the Middle East and North Africa and also in Pakistan and Turkey. The trend over time, however, has been one of a decreasing sex differential. There have been striking declines in female inactivity rates since the 1980s, by more than 20 percentage points in the following economies: Bahrain, Belgium, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, Greece, Guyana, Hong Kong (China), Ireland, Jamaica, Kuwait, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Peru, Portugal, Qatar, Spain, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay. But in many of the transition economies in Central and Eastern Europe, there appears to have been an increase in inactivity rates for both women and men; in some cases more seriously for men than for women.

Wages are among the most important indicators of the relative situation of women and men in the labour market. Unfortunately, wage data by sex remain limited; many economies still do not compile such sex-disaggregated information. Where available, *manufacturing wage indices* (KILM 15) by sex show that in the 1990s nominal wages have been rising faster for women than for men in almost all economies, and that where real wages have been falling the declines have been smaller for women than for men. While this trend may indicate that women's

purchasing power is catching up to men's, KILM 15 does not sufficiently reflect wage differentials by gender. To have a better sense of whether women and men are receiving equal pay for equal work or work of equal value, we need information for specific occupations or occupational groups.

This is where the *occupational wage and earning indices* (KILM 16) come in. An analysis of the wage indices of the selected six occupations (labourer in construction, welder, first-level education teacher, professional nurse, computer programmer in the insurance sector and accountant in banking) shows that, with few exceptions, women's wages are lower than men's. Male wages exceed female wages in all these occupations in Australia, Finland, the Republic of Korea and Singapore, with the largest wage gaps evident in the Republic of Korea. However, the sole occupation with consistently lower female wages was computer programmer, while for welders and accountants there was only one exception each. It is interesting to note, also, the wide disparity in both female and male wages for the same occupation in all economies or for all occupations in the same country. Nor is there an evident simple single female/male wage ratio.

II. Gender concerns and labour market statistics

Labour statistics have improved substantially over the years and most economies now have a policy of disaggregating by sex the data they collect. Nevertheless, these data still do not adequately reflect gender roles and responsibilities or the distinct contributions, constraints and needs of women and men in the labour market and, therefore, do not provide an accurate basis for effective and gender-sensitive labour market and employment policies and programmes.

Gender-sensitized labour statistics (encompassing, but wider than the current sex-disaggregated data) are crucial because the nature of women's and men's participation in the labour force is very different and because recent changes in labour markets and employment structures have affected the quantity and quality of women's and men's employment differently and exacerbated the differences in individual employment situations, working conditions and working life patterns. Within many economies, women are still primarily responsible for household work and care of family dependants and therefore face greater constraints than men in balancing activities associated with work and family responsibilities; they are more likely than men to work closer to home or even at home, to work shorter remunerated hours and longer unpaid hours, to move more often into and out of the labour force and even to consider themselves as economically inactive.

Gender inequalities outside the labour market, for example in access to education and training and to productive resources, affect how women and men fare in finding and keeping jobs and also influence the kinds of jobs they hold. Yet in recent years, more and more women – by choice and because of economic pressures –

have been willing and able to adjust their own time, efforts and responsibilities, or even location (migration within and across national borders), to take up any kind of job available – those jobs that men often do not want because they exist outside the formal sector, or are precarious and poorly remunerated. This has become possible largely because of the growing informalization and increase in atypical forms of work – part-time, home-based, temporary, casual, subcontracted or informal sector jobs. In the labour market gender stereotypes persist, making it hard for women to break through the “glass ceilings and walls” which block their access to managerial positions and male-dominated occupations. In the household, women’s participation in the labour market does not always translate into participation in decision-making or control over the use of income or resources they have earned.

Gender-sensitized labour statistics requirements for formulating more effective, equitable labour market and employment policies and programmes would include the following:

1. a more comprehensive measurement of “work” including “unpaid care work”;
2. a more complete coverage of workers, since the currently defined scope of international repositories excludes certain difficult-to-measure groups in which women and men are not evenly distributed;
3. better delineation of the types of labour market work, and sufficiently detailed description of the characteristics of such work; and
4. other relevant information such as family composition and the division of labour within households, which would help to identify the factors behind the gender inequalities in the labour market.

1. More comprehensive measurement

The definition of “work” needs to cover *all* activities carried out to produce goods and services in society, regardless of whether they are remunerated, declared to the tax authorities, or carried out intermittently, casually, simultaneously or seasonally, and regardless of whether the goods and services produced are intended for sale, barter or own household consumption.⁷ In most cases the KILM indicators refer to “economic activities” that are included in a country’s System of National Accounts (SNA) and reflect mainly the operations of a market economy in which people are remunerated financially for the work they do. Activities considered to be outside the boundaries of the SNA, including much of the agricultural subsistence work and production in which women tend to be heavily engaged, escape regular statistical measurement. The SNA framework usually excludes the care services produced within households or in neighbourhoods or local communities which are not remunerated by a wage – e.g. cooking and cleaning for family and community members, looking after children and sick, disabled or elderly dependants, and tending to

the emotional needs of family and community members by listening and talking to them. Yet these services take up a large amount of time and energy on the part of those performing them and are indispensable for social reproduction, that is, they are vital for sustaining a supply of labour to the economy, making human societies possible, weaving the social fabric and keeping it in good repair.⁸ It is women who are mainly responsible for such “unpaid care work”, but this participation in production and contribution to the overall welfare of society is not captured and reported within the current set of statistics.

In order to measure paid and unpaid work more comprehensively, time-use surveys of what women and men do over the course of the day have been conducted in a number of both developed and developing economies. Data on the hours and minutes they spend on various activities of daily life – which may include paid employment outside or inside the home, production for household consumption, informal-sector economic activities, caring for families, community volunteer work, leisure time – are increasingly being used to acquire insight into the relative shares of female and male household members in paid and unpaid work.⁹ Time-use data show that paid and unpaid work are often in competition, the time spent on one leaving less time for the other, and that the obligations of individuals outside the paid labour market impinge on their paid work.

Time-use surveys have also been found useful by those concerned with child labour issues; such information can reveal the contribution of children engaged in home-based production or who are not in school – usually girls – because they have to help with domestic work. However, there are still a number of important problems with the valuation of household production based on labour inputs (in terms of the number of hours and minutes that time-use surveys indicate household members spend on productive household activities). For example, valuing housework time at the wage that household members would expect to receive on the labour market tends to assign a lower value to women’s housework than to men’s, since women’s wages in the labour market are generally lower than men’s wages.¹⁰

⁸ For a discussion of the significance of “unpaid care work” and a proposal for re-visioning economies through women’s eyes, see United Nations Development Fund for Women: *Progress of the World’s Women 2000*, UNIFEM Biennial Report (New York, 2000), pp. 22-27.

⁹ For manuals, survey instruments, classifications, and technical summaries of national or pilot time-use surveys initiated in the 1990s, see website: <http://www.un.org/Depts/unsd/timeuse/tusresource.htm>. See also UN: *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on methods for conducting time-use surveys*, New York, 23-27 October 2000 and *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on gender issues in labour force statistics*, New York, 31 March - 2 April 1998.

¹⁰ For a more detailed description of the efforts toward a more comprehensive knowledge of all forms of work including the current problems with different methods of valuation of household work and production,

⁷ A. Mata Greenwood: “Gender issues...”, op cit., p. 277.

2. More complete coverage of workers

Statistics on the informal sector are crucial for a more comprehensive knowledge of all forms of work, including the work of women. The informal sector will be the subject of general discussion at the ILO International Labour Conference in 2002 because it is recognized that since the ILO first coined the term some 30 years ago the sector has greatly evolved. It has grown rapidly in almost every corner of the globe and has become increasingly more complex and heterogeneous, exacerbating the difficulties of measurement¹¹ and the problems of appropriate policy and programme formulation.

From a gender perspective, the informal sector is often “the fallback position for women who are excluded from paid employment ... It is an important source of livelihood for women in the developing world, especially in those areas where cultural norms bar them from work outside the home or where, because of conflict with household responsibilities, they cannot undertake regular employee working hours.”¹²

KILM 7 is based primarily on the definition of the informal sector in the Resolution concerning statistics of employment in the informal sector, adopted by the Fifteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians in 1993.¹³ The definition emphasizes the characteristics of the production unit/establishment/enterprise, with informal sector workers defined as women or men working in informal production units. From a gender perspective, a production-unit-focused definition as compared to a worker-focused definition, and the current coverage of KILM 7, can provide only an inadequate representation of women’s role in the informal economy. Some of the main reasons include:¹⁴

see UN: *The world’s women 2000: Trends and statistics*, ST/ESA/STAT/SER.K/16 (New York, 2000), pp. 134-135.

¹¹ For discussion of the problems of measurement, see papers presented at the meetings of the Delhi Group on Informal Sector Statistics, for example, B. De Jeu: *Contribution of the informal sector to the employment and value added in selected countries*, Paper prepared for the Second Meeting of the Expert Group on Informal Sector Statistics, Ankara, 28-30 April 1998; website: <http://www.statisticsindia.gov.in/>. See also list of references at website: <http://www.un.org/Depts/unsd/timeuse/infresource.htm>.

¹² UN: *Handbook for producing national statistical reports on women and men*, Social Statistics and Indicators Series K, No. 14 (New York, 1997), p. 232.

¹³ ILO: *Current international recommendations on labour statistics, 2000 edition* (Geneva, 2000); see also website: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/res/infsec.htm>.

¹⁴ See L. Ferran: *Notes on concepts and techniques for estimating contributions of women working in the informal sector*, United Nations Statistics Division (New York, 1998). See also J. Charmes: *Women working*

1. Data collection based on an identification of informal production units with household enterprises is likely to underestimate women’s work since women often do not conceive of their work as taking place in an “enterprise”.
2. Many economies report only on the urban informal sector. In developing economies most of the population live and work in rural areas, and women are more likely than men to be working as unpaid labour on family farms or as paid or unpaid workers in small rural informal enterprises.
3. Women are engaged in those informal activities which are the most difficult to identify and measure, including home work or outwork (often as an extension of a non-measured or non-registered manufacturing activity), street vending and paid domestic service.
4. Within informal enterprises, men are likely to be employers or own-account workers whereas women are likely to be contributing family workers or employees.

It is expected that the general discussion on the informal sector at the International Labour Conference in 2002 will stimulate more policy-useful data collection and analysis by helping to clarify concepts and definitions relating to informal employment and its manifestations in different regions and countries of the world today.

A further reason why complete statistical coverage of workers is important for gender analysis and planning in the labour market is that women and men are not evenly distributed among the difficult-to-measure groups. In addition to informal-sector workers, these groups include part-time workers, casual workers, those involved in intermittent seasonal activities and workers contracted from agencies (contingent workers). Establishment-based surveys tend to cover only regular workers in registered medium-sized and large establishments. Women predominate in the excluded, “invisible” groups of workers. Among the most “invisible” are homeworkers, who can be defined by two important characteristics.¹⁵ First, there is a paid-employment relation between the homemaker and the employer, subcontractor, agent or middleman. The agreement can be implicit or explicit, verbal or written; however, the form of payment is usually by the piece or unit of production. Second, the place of work is outside the premises of the employer. It may either be the home of the worker or some neighbourhood workstation that does not belong to the employer.

in the informal sector in Africa: New methods and new data, Paper prepared for the United Nations Statistics Division and presented at the Delhi Group Meeting on Informal Sector Statistics, Ankara, 28-30 April 1998; both papers are available at website: <http://www.un.org/Depts/unsd/timeuse/infresource.htm>.

¹⁵ UN: *1999 world survey on the role of women in development, globalization, gender and work*, United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (New York, 1999), p. 27.

It is often difficult to distinguish between homeworkers and independent (self-employed) workers;¹⁶ in developing economies especially, the work of many of the self-employed may be controlled by others on whom the former are dependent for inputs, credit or housing, so that they may in fact be “disguised” wage earners. Those concerned with gender equality and the protection of vulnerable women workers have emphasized the importance of measuring home work, which is believed to be increasing in both industrialized and developing economies and to be dominated by women. For many women home work offers the only possibility of earning income, but generally involves low pay, long hours, poor working conditions, health hazards (not only for themselves but also for their household members), insecurity of work availability, limited or no access to social benefits and protection, lack of organization or representation, and invisibility (as described above). There is also the danger that home-based workers may use their children as part of the family labour force, often leaving no time for schooling.

To identify vulnerable groups of workers who may be in need of specific targeted policy and programme interventions, it is necessary to have both better coverage and disaggregation by sex. It is also important to have cross-classifications by other demographic characteristics. Among the most important of these are age and migration status, which might reveal the double or multiple discrimination that certain groups of women face. For example, young women migrating from rural to urban areas or overseas for employment, and especially illegal female migrant workers and those who are trafficked, tend to be among the most vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. There is also increasing empirical evidence that discrimination both in hiring and firing women is occurring at earlier ages. Women above 35 years of age are often considered “too old” for certain jobs.

3. Better delineation and description of types of work

Better delineation and detailed description of various types of labour market work are critical for understanding the differences in working conditions of men and women workers and for providing a more solid basis for the promotion of gender equality. Information by size and place of establishment might reveal, for instance, that women tend to be concentrated in smaller establishments that provide poorer working conditions or where labour legislation is harder to enforce. Information on the type of

employment contract is also important. Many of the new employment opportunities for women have been in part-time, temporary or casual work, as contingent or contract workers, rather than in regular full-time work. Conditions of employment are generally inferior (although pay may be higher) in these non-standard or atypical forms of work; workers are often not covered by labour and social security legislation nor by the provisions of collective bargaining; some often do not even have written employment contracts.

The categories of employment contracts should also include trainees and apprentices. In export processing zones especially, there is evidence that many women workers are kept on a trainee status for periods that extend beyond the actual training they receive, as a means of paying them lower wage rates or excluding them from non-wage benefits. Information on non-wage benefits, such as flexible working time, child and other dependant-care arrangements, maternity benefits, provisions for pregnant or breastfeeding women and paternal leave, shows the facilities and supports available to women and men workers to enable them to achieve a balance between work and family responsibilities. Statistics on occupational segregation, wages, training and career opportunities, working time, and occupational safety and health are all important for shedding light on differences in the quality of employment of women and men in the labour market. Information on membership in trade unions and employers’ organizations, including representation in decision-making bodies, would help to indicate the relative ability of women and men to influence the terms and conditions of their employment.

4. Other relevant information

A largely uncharted area for improving the gender-sensitized labour statistics available to KILM is that of juxtaposing labour market information with information on family and household composition and dynamics. Since workers are people with families, information on the presence of young children and other dependants requiring care in the household would indicate both the amount of time and effort that they – women in particular – can put into paid employment, whether outside the home or home-based. Information on patterns of working life would, for instance, show that women are likely to enter, leave and re-enter the labour market more times over the course of their lives than men are, so as to combine work with childbearing and rearing, and are therefore in greater need of lifelong learning and continuous training to enhance their employability and flexibility at different stages of family life.

Ideally, information on the division of labour and the allocation of resources within households should also be available, so as to throw light not only on how women and men spend their time on paid and unpaid work but also on women’s entitlements as compared to men, which in turn perpetuate gender gaps in capabilities. For instance, it would be useful to understand whether and how women’s involvement in paid work translates into

¹⁶ The ILO Convention on Home Work, 1996 (No. 177) defines home work as “work carried out by a person, to be referred to as a homemaker, (i) in his or her home or in other premises of his or her choice, other than the workplace of the employer; (ii) for remuneration; (iii) which results in a product or service as specified by the employer, irrespective of who provides the equipment, materials or other inputs used, unless this person has the degree of autonomy and of economic independence necessary to be considered an independent worker under national laws, regulations or court decisions”.

control over income and decision-making within the household.