

# Gender Equality in the World of Work

ILO Newsletter



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## EVENTS

- **ILO Gender Audit Panel Discussion**

Findings of the first participatory gender audit in the ILO were presented at a panel discussion on 17 June 2002 in Geneva. Four panelists talked about their experiences in the ILO Gender Audit, which took place in 15 units at headquarters and in the organization's field offices from October 2001 to April 2002.

The panel, hosted by the ILO Bureau for Gender Equality, was attended by around 75 delegates to the International Labour Conference, and representatives of the United Nations, ILO, and civil society groups including NGOs. About 15 of the participants, as well as two of the four panel speakers, were men.

Panelists who had been part of audit teams said the participatory, self-assessment approach of the audit facilitated their role in helping work units identify their own good practices and gaps in gender mainstreaming.

Workshops with both professional and general staff during the audits also contributed to discussion about organizational and methodological challenges to promoting gender equality in ILO programmes and initiatives.

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- **Promoting Women's Entrepreneurship**

Promoting women's entrepreneurship through employers' organizations was the theme of an ILO Asia-Pacific regional meeting on 13-17 May 2002 in Bangkok, Thailand. Representatives of employers' organizations from 12 countries discussed regional developments in support of women entrepreneurs and the role of national employers' organizations in these; emerging trends and developments in women's entrepreneurship; moving from women's empowerment to gender equality; and the formulation of action plans. Participants also exchanged information and experiences concerning their support to women entrepreneurs.

The meeting was hosted by the ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (ROAP) and co-organized by the ILO InFocus Programme on Boosting Employment Through Small Enterprise Development (IFP/SEED), ILO Bureau for Employers' Activities (ACT/EMP), and ILO Bureau for Gender Equality.

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- **Youth, Women and Conflict**

Women have paid a heavy price in armed conflicts during the past decade such as in Rwanda, Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan. But women can also play a key role in helping their societies rebuild and mend—both materially and psychologically—from war.

This was the message of hope at a celebration in Geneva to mark International Women's Day on 8 March 2002.

The event, co-hosted by the ILO and Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), focused on youth, women and conflict. It featured three young women who shared their personal experiences in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, and in Sarajevo of then-former Yugoslavia.

- **Inter-Regional Consultation on Gender Mainstreaming**

The annual ILO Inter-Regional Consultation on Gender Mainstreaming, held 18-22 February 2002 in Turin, Italy, aimed to enhance the efficiency and coordination of institution-wide efforts on mainstreaming gender equality in all the organization's activities. The meeting was organized by the ILO Bureau for Gender Equality in close cooperation with the ILO Training Centre.

Plenary sessions and parallel working group sessions were organized around three thematic modules: Decent Work and Gender Equality; Progress in Gender Mainstreaming; and Strategic Planning on Gender Equality.

Sessions within the three modules included: Decent Work and Gender Equality; Poverty Reduction and Lessons Learned; Equal Pay for Work of Equal Value; Informal Sector and Special Target Group Interventions; The Male Perspective on Gender Equality and Decent Work; and Update on the Gender Audit. An open space for ad-hoc meetings and a knowledge fair were also integrated into the week-long meeting.

The approximately 50 participants included members of the ILO Gender Network (Senior Gender Specialists, Sector Gender Coordinators, and Gender Focal Points). They represented both headquarters-based units as well as ILO field offices. Others included ILO programme officers and specialists; about 25% of participants were male.

## TECHNICAL COOPERATION

- **Arab States**

A new and positive climate in the Arab states region is one of the main reasons for the improving representation of women both in workers' and employers' organizations, according to the ILO Regional Office for the Arab States (ILO-ROAS). It is supporting this momentum through activities focused on capacity building, strategic planning, and awareness raising with the organizations.

“While there are visible improvements in the representation of women in employers' and workers' organizations in the region”, said Mary Kawar, ILO Senior Gender Specialist based in Beirut, “challenges still exist. There is still a way to go in order to mainstream gender concerns in these organizations.”

Between 1999 and 2001 relevant units, committees and forums have been established in employers' organizations in Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Syria and the United Arab Emirates. These are in addition to those already set up in Jordan and Lebanon. Due to increasing demand, a training course previously organized by the Turin-based ILO Training Centre on strengthening associations for women entrepreneurs will be repeated this year.

Gender issues have been mainstreamed into a technical cooperation project document concerning capacity building of the Chamber of Industry in Qatar. ILO-ROAS contributed to this effort by initiating contacts with businesswomen in the country and holding a subsequent national seminar to promote female entrepreneurship.

Although women's units and/or committees in workers' organizations have existed for some time in the region, they are relatively weak. For this reason ILO-ROAS has been working closely with Palestinian and Yemeni women's committees to develop a programme of assistance through technical cooperation projects. It also held an awareness-raising workshop in Kuwait to help support a newly-established working women's committee in the country. These activities were in addition to an annual seminar on Arab women workers' rights, organized in cooperation with the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions.

However, improvements in representation have not been equally translated into representation in decision-making positions. A woman member is represented at executive levels only among the Omani employers' and Palestinian workers' organizations.

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- **West Africa**

One of the major activities of the ILO West Africa Multidisciplinary Advisory Team (ILO-EMAO) is involvement in the preparation of poverty-reduction strategy papers (PRSP). The papers are part of the process of the enhanced Heavily-Indebted Poor Countries Initiative, led by the World Bank.

“This major initiative”, said Grace Hemmings, ILO Senior Gender Specialist based in Abidjan, “requires integrating gender concerns at all levels of the preparation”.

In Côte d'Ivoire ILO-EMAO and World Bank are collaborating with other partners and the government on preparation of a country gender assessment that will be used as a working document for the PRSP. This involvement has helped to bring attention to promoting employment as a long-term strategy for poverty reduction. And it has highlighted the importance of integrating women into the formal labour force and reinforcing the application of women workers' rights.

ILO-EMAO has also participated in national workshops on gender and the PRSP, met with the government representative in charge of the PRSP process at the national level, and helped encourage the participation of a special advisor with training in gender and labour issues to participate in the process.

In Madagascar ILO/EMAO is also working with the World Bank on integrating gender concerns in the identification, design, implementation and evaluation of an Intermediate Rural Transport

Project. Collaboration in the project, which will aim to generate a large number of jobs, is also helping to lay the groundwork for ILO's participation in promoting the integration of gender concerns in the nation's PRSP.

The Madagascar project will help to provide the means by which women and men can have increased access to social services, such as health and education. And it will work to provide greater economic opportunities, especially for women.

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- **Central and Eastern Europe**

Promotion of non-discrimination in employment and occupation is one of the objectives of a programme of cooperation signed in May 2002 between the government of Poland and the ILO Central and Eastern European Team (ILO-CEET). This objective is also included in a programme of cooperation between the government of Bulgaria and ILO-CEET, which was signed in June.

“Under the Bulgarian programme”, said Minna Hanhijarvi, ILO Gender Focal Point based in Budapest, “a seminar will be held in 2003 concerning non-discrimination at work, equal pay of equal work of equal value, and equal opportunities for workers with family responsibilities. This is aimed at assisting ILO constituents in the preparation of new legislation on these issues”.

Within an ongoing ILO project in Ukraine, a network of social partners on gender has been established. The project on Promoting Fundamental Principles and Rights has produced an action plan to establish a national gender centre in the country, as well as to launch a statistical study on gender discrimination in the workplace. In order to mainstream gender in the project's activities, a special gender equality module was prepared for inclusion in all its training programmes.

Case studies on the gender impacts of social security reforms are also underway in Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic. The studies are part of the ILO-CEET project on Strengthening Social Security in Central and Eastern Europe through Research and Technical Cooperation.

On the basis of research for the project, a guide for training on social security and gender will be developed. The guide, to be published with the case studies later this year, will outline key issues for discussion and give suggestions for training methods.

Another ILO-CEET project on Strengthening Dialogue in South Eastern Europe will aim to address the problem of inequality. National training seminars will be held on the role of social dialogue in promoting equal opportunities in the labour market. And in order to help reinforce the autonomy and capacity of workers' and employers' organizations, the project will aim to strengthen networks on gender in trade unions.

The project on strengthening dialogue was launched in 2002 for a period of three years and is part of the framework of the Stability Pact Initiative for Social Cohesion in South Eastern Europe.

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- **South-East Asia and the Pacific**

The development of the Decent Work country programme in the Philippines, launched in May 2002 by the ILO South-East Asia and the Pacific Multidisciplinary Advisory Team (ILO-SEAPAT), incorporated gender concerns in the planning and preparation stages.

“At the core of the Decent Work Agenda”, said Naomi Cassirer, ILO Senior Gender Specialist based in Manila, “is a strong commitment to gender equality and to addressing sources of inequality that result in wasted human talent and potential, and hamper development. Consequently, gender analysis and gender mainstreaming have been central to the development and implementation of the Decent Work Action Programme for the Philippines”.

Concerning responses on workers’ fundamental rights and principles, the Decent Work country programme in the Philippines calls for greater promotion and enforcement of ILO Convention 100 on Equality in Occupation and Employment, and Convention 111 on Equal Remuneration for Work of Equal Value.

In the area of greater employment and income opportunities, the programme includes micro-, small and medium enterprise development with efforts to reach out to women.

Concerning enhancement of social protection for all, the programme identifies the need to reform social security system schemes to take into account sex differences in employment patterns and outcomes. It also identifies the need to strengthen micro-insurance schemes through community-based organizations comprised primarily of women, promote awareness and expand policies to reduce sexual harassment cases, and to address occupational safety and health concerns that women and men face in the workplace.

To strengthen tripartism and social dialogue, the programme calls for research and training on gender and employment issues, and the extension of representation by unions and employers’ organizations to under-represented groups, which are comprised primarily of women.

ILO support to integrated responses will include testing a comprehensive approach to local economic development, and designing an action programme to improve performance of the urban informal sector which is dominated by women. In addition, an integrated approach will be developed for helping to protect overseas Filipino workers abroad, of whom women are an ever-increasing share.

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## RESOURCES

- **Action Against Sexual Harassment**

A new book from the ILO Bangkok Area Office and East Asia Multidisciplinary Advisory Team discusses attitudes and common beliefs of different groups of people in Asia and the Pacific toward sexual harassment.

The book is entitled *Action Against Sexual Harassment at Work in Asia and the Pacific*. It analyses types of sexual harassment, as well as formal and informal action taken by women workers' groups and organizations at regional and international levels. It also suggests workplace policies and practical measures for preventing sexual harassment.

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- **Crisis, Women and other Gender Concerns**

Published in February 2002, *Crisis, Women and other Gender Concerns* stresses that women's concerns and other gender issues remain critical in all crisis and post-crisis contexts.

The working paper, published by the ILO InFocus Programme on Crisis Response and Reconstruction (IFP/CRISIS), brings together issues papers that were presented at a High Level Research Consultation held by IFP/CRISIS in May 2000.

Themes addressed in the working paper include: enhancing women's capacity to manage and recover from disasters; gender issues in natural disasters; women in conflict and post-war reconstruction; and the gender dimension in disaster preparedness.

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- **ILO Gender Equality Tool Website**

The Gender Equality Tool is a website launched by the ILO on 8 March 2002, International Women's Day. The participatory and database-driven site is managed by the ILO Bureau for Gender Equality. It is designed to promote information exchange and enhance knowledge on gender related issues, and is accessible in English, French and Spanish.

The user-friendly site includes sections on gender-related events, resources, links, ILO Standards, and the ILO Gender Network.

As the site grows it will cover relevant initiatives and information from ILO offices around the world, as well as organizations of the UN system, academic and research institutes, media and news services, and a wide range of NGOs.

The Gender Equality Tool is part of a growing number of ILO activities that are aimed at helping to promote gender mainstreaming and gender equality.

*Contact: website [www.ilo.org/gender](http://www.ilo.org/gender) (ILO staff using intranet can click on the ILO-wide homepage, then "site map" and then—under the list of cross-cutting objectives—"gender equality".)*

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