

Gender Equality in the World of Work

ILO Electronic Newsletter



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This newsletter is produced in electronic and paper form three times per year by the Bureau for Gender Equality, based at the secretariat of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in Geneva, Switzerland. Readers are encouraged to reproduce the text and circulate among members of their own networks (but kindly inform the Bureau for Gender Equality, ILO, 4 route des Morillons, 1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland, fax +41 22 799 6388, e-mail gender@ilo.org, website www.ilo.org/gender). Feedback about the newsletter is also encouraged.

EVENTS

- **Roundtable on Lessons Learned and Next ILO Gender Audit**

The First ILO Gender Audit helped to bring greater understanding and commitment to mainstreaming gender in daily work, while at the same time highlighting the challenges to both individual staff members as well as the organization as a whole. These were some of the comments by speakers during an in-house panel, held at ILO headquarters on 26 September in Geneva, entitled What Have We Learned and What Next—First ILO Gender Audit and Next Steps.

Participants on the panel, held by the Bureau for Gender Equality, included one support staff and one professional representative of an audited work unit; a member of an audit facilitation team; and a Director of an ILO sector in which an audit took place.

“The ILO must adopt a gender perspective in all of its work and at all levels”, said Alejandro Bonilla, Policy and Research Coordinator of the Management Support Unit of the ILO Social Protection Sector. “By 2005 the world will add another two billion people—95% in developing countries. We must improve our ways of doing things in order to have a real and positive impact on people’s lives. The First ILO Gender Audit was part of the beginning of this process. We should all be part of the gender mainstreaming effort since taking a gender perspective is an effective and efficient way to reduce decent work deficits”.

Panel members also stressed the importance of learning more about gender concepts and practical ways to integrate gender in analysis and planning, as well as translating recommendations of gender facilitation teams into concrete and measurable steps with clear timeframes. The coordinator of the First ILO Gender Audit, Senior Gender Specialist Linda Wirth, noted that the audit was now being used to assist ILO constituents in developing and/or acting on their own gender mainstreaming strategies, tools development, monitoring, and assessments.

Contact: ILO Bureau for Gender Equality (see address on first page).

- **Upcoming WEDGE Conferences on Women Entrepreneurs**

A series of national conferences in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Zambia will focus on the findings of field research about women entrepreneurs. The events, which are part of the ILO Jobs, Gender and Small Enterprise in Africa Project, are planned in Addis Ababa from 18-19 November; Dar es Salaam from 21-22 November; and in Lusaka from 5-6 December.

The Africa project is part of the ILO Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality (WEDGE) unit. Participants in the Africa conferences will include representatives of ILO constituents, associations of women entrepreneurs, government departments, international organizations, other support agencies, and non-governmental organizations. Issues to be discussed include research findings on growth-orientated women entrepreneurs, and strategies for overcoming barriers to their success.

WEDGE, which is within the InFocus Programme on Boosting Employment Through Small Enterprise Development (IFP/SEED), aims to promote increased economic opportunities for women, as well as gender mainstreaming.

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TECHNICAL COOPERATION

An inter-regional project on Enhancing the Gender Mainstreaming Capacity of ILO Constituents, coordinated by the ILO Bureau for Gender Equality, has been launched in China, Nepal, Tanzania and Uganda. The objective of the project is to strengthen the capacity of ILO constituents' organizations to assess implications for women and men of any planned action, and implement strategies to mainstream a gender dimension in their employment policies and agendas, while promoting social dialogue.

The project, which is building on the experience of the First ILO Gender Audit, includes gender assessments in selected constituents' organizations. The results will be the starting point for further capacity-building measures in gender analysis and gender planning. Tools and guidelines will also be developed to mainstream a gender perspective into a concrete employment-related

issue, to be identified for each country by national tripartite task forces. In three of the four target countries, the project will help to ensure that gender equality concerns are mainstreamed in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).

Representatives from the constituents' organizations involved will also take part in an online open and distance-learning programme entitled *Mainstreaming Gender eQuality in the World of Work*, developed by the ILO International Training Centre based in Turin, Italy.

The project, which will also aim to reinforce a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy in the countries concerned, is part of an integrated approach to promoting the ILO's Decent Work agenda. By combining a gender mainstreaming strategy for employment-related issues with social dialogue, the project will help operationalize the Decent Work agenda at the national level.

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- **Arab States**

Employment trends in Jordan are slowly changing in favour of women, according to the ILO Regional Office for Arab States (ROAP-ILO). Despite low official rates of economic activity, women's employment in the country almost doubled between 1980 and 2000, from 14.7% to 24.6%. In addition, the rate of growth of female employment exceeded the rate of growth of male employment for the same period.

“Within these changes” said Mary Kawar, ILO Senior Gender Specialist based in Beirut, “one overlying factor seems to be an increasing visibility of women workers in the manufacturing sector and particularly in textiles and garment making. This is due to reasons related to the economic reform process, the new and evolving role of the private sector, and the expansion of export-led industries”.

As the Jordanian economy enters the global market economy, women's employment trends are being directly affected, noted Ms. Kawar. At first glance the new employment opportunities for women in the export-led industry of textiles and garment making seem to be based on low wages, gender stereotyping of jobs, and occupational segregation. Since most Jordanian women working in the manufacture sector perform repetitive assembly work, their jobs do not provide career opportunities or transferable skills.

Most of these women tend to enter their new jobs with weak bargaining positions since they are unaware of their rights. And working conditions, said women who were interviewed in an ILO survey, were poor with weak ventilation systems, crowded workspace and insufficient facilities such as cafeterias or restrooms. Despite this it should be acknowledged that the country's textile and garment industry is providing young, single and poor women—both urban and rural—with new employment opportunities.

The survey, part of an ILO research project undertaken through a national tripartite working group, also found that most working women interviewed were contributing income to their

families. This was helping to form a social safety net for many Jordanian families, and leading to change in prevailing social and gender roles within households. In fact, many young women were becoming an economic asset instead of dependant on their families.

The survey was part of a research project entitled Women Workers in the Textiles Industry in Jordan, which focused on three objectives. First, it aimed to generate baseline data on employment patterns and conditions of work of women workers in a new and evolving sector, and in a period of economic reform and globalization in Jordan. Second, it sought to engage tripartite constituents in jointly searching for improvements and solutions in the employment opportunities and conditions of work of women workers. Third, the project was designed to create an opportunity for social dialogue on gender issues.

This included establishing a working group that would develop as a permanent tripartite gender equality structure. In addition, and in an attempt at expanding partnerships, the National Commission for Jordanian Women was part of this working group.

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- **Central and Eastern Europe**

Gender issues have been mainstreamed into a recently-finalized technical cooperation project document on strengthening social dialogue, tripartism and technical expertise in labour law in the countries of South Eastern Europe. The project will be launched in the beginning of 2003 in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Macedonia, Moldova, and Romania. It is entitled Social Cohesion Initiative of the Stability Pact: Strengthening Social Dialogue and Tripartism and Enhancing the Technical Expertise in Labour Law in the Countries of South Eastern Europe.

“This project”, said Minna Hanhijarvi, ILO Gender Focal Point based in Budapest, “will aim to build on one of the priority areas for ILO work in the South Eastern European countries: enhancing women workers’ rights with emphasis on social security reforms”.

The capacity-building activities of the project will be coordinated by the ILO Central and Eastern European Team (ILO-CEET), based in Budapest. Capacity-building is designed to provide constituents with knowledge and skills in tripartite consultations between governments, workers’ and employers’ organizations on issues such as labour law reform, equal opportunities, employment and income policies, privatization and restructuring programmes.

Conclusions adopted by an April 2002 conference in Tallinn, Estonia are available on the ILO-CEET website (see below). The report about the conference, which was entitled Information and Communication Technologies and Decent Work, will also be available on the website. Among other things, the report discusses gender equality policies related to information and communication technologies. These include pay, working hours, job opportunities, and

education, which it says should be promoted and implemented by governments, trade unions and employers in Central and Eastern Europe.

Some speakers at the conference, which was organized by ILO-CEET and the governments of Estonia and Finland, noted that this was necessary in order to avoid increasing gender inequalities in the information society. Existing laws and policies in this respect in many Central and Eastern Europe countries need to be reviewed, notes the report. According to survey results that are cited by the report, in Estonia almost 60% of teleworkers who work outside the office—usually at home or without a fixed workplace—are women. At the same time employment relations, working conditions and control of working time are not properly regulated by legislation or by collective bargaining.

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- **Latin America**

A two-year technical cooperation project, entitled Integrating Gender Dimensions into Poverty Reduction and Employment Generation Policies and Programmes in Latin America, was launched in July. The project, coordinated by the ILO Regional Office for the Americas, covers six countries in the region: Argentina, Bolivia, Honduras, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Peru.

“This project aims to promote incorporation of a gender dimension in public policies and programmes for poverty alleviation, and employment and income generation”, said Laís Abramo, ILO Senior Regional Gender Specialist for the Americas, who is based in Santiago.

The project is focusing on awareness raising and institutional capacity building among ILO constituents and other relevant actors. Emphasis is on policy makers and programme officers who design and execute public policies and programmes at local and national levels. The project also includes training of trainers, who will engage themselves in sensibilization and capacity-building activities using manuals of the Capacity-Building Programme on Gender Equality, Employment Promotion and Poverty Eradication (GPE). Pilot cases will include review and modification, as necessary, of selected existing public policies and/or programmes. The Latin American version of GPE materials is accessible on www.cinterfor.org.uy, and the Brazilian version is being completed based on results of validation workshops. This material, which is a joint effort of the Ministry of Labour and Employment of Brazil and the ILO, will be available at the end of the year. At that time technical cooperation activities based on local needs corresponding to the GPE framework may be initiated.

The Regional Office for the Americas and the ILO Bureau for Workers’ Activities (ACTRAV) have been coordinating studies on Collective Bargaining and Gender Equality in Latin America. The studies cover Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela. These “national diagnostics” systematically update and analyze how and to what extent issues concerning the rights of female workers and gender relations at work are incorporated in collective bargaining processes. These should help enable the ILO and its constituents to evaluate

recent progress in this area, as well as identify obstacles to achieving gender equality. An internal seminar was held in Lima from 30 September to 2 October to analyze results of the studies and define a work plan to reinforce unions' actions related to these issues.

Persisting wage gaps among men and women cannot be justified due to “maternity costs” that employers perceive as an additional expense when they hire women workers, according to findings of regional studies on labour costs disaggregated by sex. The studies in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico and Uruguay quantified labour costs of men and women, especially those related to maternity protection.

Analysis showed that employers do not directly bear the maternity costs; instead the costs are covered by public funds (for example in Chile) or social security to which employers contribute (such as in Argentina, Brazil, Mexico and Uruguay). The direct contributions that employers make to social security systems are calculated based on the total number of employees—both male and female workers—and not associated with the number or age of women workers. Accordingly, this current system employed in the majority of Latin American countries does not justify the argument of additional costs in hiring women workers because of maternity protection. Detailed results of the *Estudio Regional de Costos Laborales Desegregados por Sexo*, carried out during 1999-2000 by the ILO Regional Office, will be published at the end of October.

Representatives of central trade unions in Peru participated in a event on 12 September held by the Lima-based Multi-disciplinary Technical Team for Andean countries (MDT-Lima) and ACTRAV. At the event, which focused on raising awareness about gender equality in trade unions, several initiatives or publications were presented. These included an Action Plan for Equal Opportunities for Men and Women at work and in unions in Peru for 2003-2005, which was developed by the Secretary of Women of four central trade unions with technical assistance from the MDT-Lima after a series of discussions with women union members. Also presented was a new book on women workers' participation in unions, entitled *Participación laboral y sindical de las mujeres en el Perú*; and a *Mapa de género de las Mujeres sindicalistas en Perú*, a participatory diagnostic of problems concerning women's participation in the labour market and in unions. At the event, representatives of the union Secretariats said they were committed to support their respective Secretary of Women and implementation of the Action Plan.

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ILO Regional Office for the Americas, (same as above), e-mail oit@oit.org.pe, website www.oit.org.pe

To order GPE materials in English: www.ilo.org/public/english/support/publ/xttextww.htm#b384

- **Southeast Asia and the Pacific**

At a workshop held from 16-17 July in Jakarta, representatives of ILO constituents convened to discuss the current context and policy framework for equality and equal opportunity in Indonesia.

At the workshop, organized by the Indonesian Ministry of Labour and supported by the ILO, participants also identified the next steps for moving forward an equal opportunity strategy.

“There is increasing momentum in Indonesia for equal employment opportunity initiatives”, said Naomi Cassirer, ILO Senior Gender Specialist based in Manila.

The goals of the workshop included providing information about equality and equal opportunity policies in Indonesia and some other countries in the region; identifying the types of equality and equal opportunity policies that may be relevant to the Indonesian context; and developing concrete actions for following up the workshop’s findings.

Thematic sessions were held on international and national instruments, policies and activities; equality and equal opportunity policies in four countries; and labour market stratification by sex in Indonesia and key issues to consider regarding women’s disadvantages and discriminatory barriers.

Participants also divided into discussion groups and developed action plans on setting up a coordinating committee on equality and equal opportunity; developing a gender equality information database in an equality and equal opportunity framework; and preparation of gender equality policy guidelines in equality and equal opportunity in the workplace.

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- **Southern and Eastern Africa**

The project on Enhancing the Gender Mainstreaming Capacity of ILO Constituents (see description in Technical Cooperation section above) will help demonstrate that the task of mainstreaming gender concerns everyone. The ILO Southern Africa Multidisciplinary Advisory Team (ILO-SAMAT) will work closely with the Gender Bureau and the ILO Area Office based in Dar es Salaam concerning implementation of the project; ILO-SAMAT will provide technical support to implementation in Uganda.

“When national gender machineries are described as weak”, said Judica Makhetha, ILO Senior Gender Specialist based in Harare, “it is often a result of misconceptions regarding the roles and responsibilities of such mechanisms—be they departments, ministries or units. Instead of a catalyst and coordinator, national gender machineries are often viewed as the ‘doer’ of gender mainstreaming at the national level. This is often the basis for the harsh judgment and skepticism of national institutions as well as international development partners”.

In Uganda, ILO constituents have identified social protection as a priority in promoting the ILO Decent Work agenda. In this regard, the need for capacity building for gender mainstreaming has been identified, as well as information collection, analysis and dissemination about social protection. For this reason the project will aim to strengthen the integration of gender into any process to develop plans, policies, programmes and activities related to social protection.

The project will work with macro-level planning processes in Uganda, such as the Social Development Investment Plan (SDIP) which is part of national development planning in Uganda. Efforts will be made to enhance the capacity of all involved to include gender issues and perspectives in the SDIP process.

General tools for gender mainstreaming will be used to develop and adapt functional tailor-made tools to ensure that most of the interventions will be both practical and specific. The project will also aim to help make gender issues a permanent feature of social dialogue in Uganda.

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RESOURCES

- **Final Report on First ILO Gender Audit**

This report, which summarizes findings of the First ILO Gender Audit, says all 15 work units that voluntarily participated in audits from October 2001 to April 2002 were found to have “good practices” related to gender mainstreaming in research and projects. These included data disaggregated by sex, gender-sensitive analysis, the goal of promoting gender equality built into objectives and indicators, and/or conclusions and strategies for action to promote gender equality.

The participatory gender audits, held at work units based in headquarters and in field offices, also showed that gender mainstreaming efforts in the ILO had been boosted by the organization’s results-based management approach. However, the report notes that the majority of approximately 750 documents reviewed during the audits—as well as a global review of ILO flagship publications and key documents—were gender-blind. There was also confusion among staff about gender concepts and terminology. And more focus on strategic gender needs—which aim to bring about change in relations, roles and tasks between men and women at personal and institutional levels—was needed to help promote equality between men and women.

Critical areas to work on, according to the report, include strengthening collective work on gender indicators; developing the male side of gender analysis; elaborating a deeper policy analysis on gender equality and the ILO Decent Work agenda; tackling the issue of low representation of women among ILO constituents; and implementing gender mainstreaming programmes with the constituents.

The report also makes recommendations on capacity building for gender mainstreaming, as well as gender-sensitive human resources and staff policy. Other chapters discuss outcomes and lessons learned as a result of the audit, as well as its follow-up. Annexes provide, among other information, details on criteria used in the audits and sex disaggregated statistics on staff. The report, which will be submitted to the ILO Governing Body in November 2002 in Geneva, is also

being shared with UN system organizations and other groups and institutions interested in the participatory gender audit process and lessons learned.

Contact: ILO Bureau for Gender Equality (see address on first page). The entire report is accessible at www.ilo.org/gender in the Resources section.

- **Promoting Gender Equality: Resource Kit for Trade Unions**

A resource kit targeted to trade unions and other types of organizations has been produced to help raise awareness about gender issues and promote gender equality within unions. *Promoting Gender Equality: Resource Kit for Trade Unions*, published by the ILO Gender Promotion Programme (GENPROM), was developed through collaboration with the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) as well as various national trade unions.

The kit, available in booklet form or from the GENPROM website, addresses issues including: promoting gender equality through collective bargaining; guidelines for gender equality bargaining; organizing the unorganized; the informal economy and other unprotected workers; organizing in diversity; and promoting women workers' rights through alliances and solidarity.

The *Promoting Gender Equality* kit, which has been translated into French, Spanish, Chinese and Indonesian, also contains the report of an ILO-ICFTU survey entitled *The Role of Trade Unions in Promoting Gender Equality and Protecting Vulnerable Women Workers*.

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- **Women and Men in the Informal Economy**

On the occasion of the 90th Session of the International Labour Conference, held in June 2002 in Geneva, the ILO issued a report on *Women and Men in the Informal Economy*. The report includes an up-to-date statistical summary and analyses of the situations and characteristics of employment of women and men in the informal economy in selected countries, based on available data. It also features recommendations on measures to improve statistics and data on the informal economy for policy making. The statistics in the report were analyzed and presented according to the new conceptual framework for the informal economy; this framework was proposed in the ILO report on *Decent Work and the Informal Economy*, which was discussed at the International Labour Conference.

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- **Communicating about Gender Equality: ILO Online Photo Library**

Gender is one of the themes of a virtual photographic library launched in September by ILO. The Online Photo Library, managed by the Department of Communication, features photos of men and women working in partnership in various settings in both industrialized and developing countries. Some show women working in non-traditional industries, or as managers; others portray capacity-building or skills training of men and women.

The library, which can be searched with a combination of other themes such as cooperatives, construction and disability, features gender-sensitive photo captions. It is also searchable in French and Spanish and can be consulted on the Internet (see address below). Users can request high-definition copies of the photographs by e-mail for use in relevant publications or by institutions or civil society organizations.

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- **ILO and Russian Business Community Against Discrimination**

More information about a series of breakfast discussions with representatives of the Russian business community, including one on discrimination held 24 September in Moscow, is available from the ILO Team for Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

The discussions focus on four ILO principles that were reaffirmed in the ILO Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at work: freedom of association and collective bargaining; elimination of all forms of forced and compulsory labour; effective abolition of child labour; and elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. The principles are also promoted in the Global Compact, a United Nations endeavor to associate the worldwide business community with the promotion of fundamental rights.

The breakfast discussions organized by ILO include a presentation of the principle to be discussed, followed by an open exchange of views between key business leaders and representatives of United Nations agencies.

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