

Equality at work for women and men in Asia and the Pacific

Mainstreaming gender in decent work promotion

What is gender equality?

Gender equality at work – or equal employment opportunities and treatment – is fundamental for enabling men and women to claim a fair share of the wealth they help generate, in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity.

“Eliminating gender discrimination is a matter of smart economics. Unlocking women’s productive capacity and creativity is a win-win game for enterprises, workers, governments and societies”.

*Michelle Bachelet,
Executive Director of UN Women*

“Gender equality concerns us all – rich and poor, developed and less developed, male and female – because we cannot have balanced, sustainable recovery, or maximise the benefits of Asia’s next phase of development, without it”.

*Sachiko Yamamoto, Regional Director,
ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific*

The challenge

Discrimination perpetuates poor labour market outcomes for women:

- All women work, but 45 per cent of working age women in Asia are outside the labour market, compared to 19 per cent of men.
- Women are concentrated in low-productivity occupations and vulnerable employment, such as contributing family work, contract, temporary or domestic work.
- Numerous women are micro-entrepreneurs. Only 1 per cent of women in the region ran their own businesses with paid employees in 2009.
- The gender pay gap in the region remains pronounced; women’s wages average 70-90 per cent of men’s.
- Violence against women at work is a significant problem.
- Women are under-represented in decision-making in government and company boardrooms.



Investing in gender equality

Successful strategies for promoting gender equality and decent work include:

Mainstreaming gender in employment, social and macro-economic objectives, policies and programmes geared at supporting job-rich, equitable growth by:

- Creating better quality jobs in urban services, agriculture and rural employment.
- Protecting young and migrant women from labour exploitation.
- Increasing women’s voices in decision-making.

Developing sound labour laws and active labour market policies in line with key international labour instruments for gender equality promotion, including:

- Elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation, and equal remuneration for work of equal value – both fundamental labour standards.
- Provision of adequate maternity protection and measures for reconciling work and family commitments.
- Decent work for home-based, part-time and domestic workers and those in hidden employment relationships.
- Prohibition of child and forced labour and promotion of safe migration.



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Further investment in **skills and enterprise development** by:

- Designing gender-responsive labour supply measures that tackle assumptions that channel youth into a narrow range of “suitable” occupations.
- Improving women’s access to productive resources, business skills and networks, and creating a facilitating business environment for women entrepreneurs.

Extending **social protection and safe work** by:

- Building basic social protection services for all, including adequate maternity benefits.
- Taking measures to create a better work-family balance.
- Preventing and redressing sexual harassment in workplaces.

Putting **gender equality** on the **Decent Work Agenda**:

- Promoting equal employment opportunity action plans and institutional mechanisms.
- Increasing women’s representation at higher levels of labour institutions, and in employers’ and workers’ organizations.

Highlights of activities in the region

- Knowledge sharing and capacity building on equality and non-discrimination in employment in China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Thailand and Viet Nam.
- Action against workplace violence and sexual harassment in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia.
- Increasing compliance with maternity benefit payment from 55 to 73 per cent in only one year, after awareness-raising in textile factories.



Resources

Women and labour markets in Asia: Rebalancing for gender equality

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_154846.pdf

Equality and non-discrimination in China: Training package: Handbook

http://www.ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_154692/la-ng--en/index.htm

Training manual

http://www.ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_154693/la-ng--en/index.htm

Gender mainstreaming strategies in decent work promotion: Toolkit

http://www.ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_143849/la-ng--en/index.htm

GEMS toolkit in brief

http://www.ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_143847/la-ng--en/index.htm

Sexual harassment at the workplace - FAQ

http://www.ilo.org/jakarta/info/public/nl/WCMS_149651/lang--en/index.htm

Work, income and gender equality in East Asia: Action guide

http://www.ilo.org/asia/whatwedo/publications/WCMS_101719/la-ng--en/index.htm

Equality and discrimination resources

http://www.ilo.org/asia/areas/equality-and-discrimination/facet/lang--en/index.htm?facetcriteria=TYP=Publication&facetdynlist=UWCM S_139813

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15th Asia and the Pacific Regional Meeting – Kyoto, Japan, 4-7 December 2011