

UNRISD ILO South Centre  
Seminar  
Multiple Global Crises and Gender:  
Rethinking Alternative Paths for Development  
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## *Gender dimensions of the world of work in a globalized economy*

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## Introduction

- When a crisis hits, it is often women who bear the blunt. This is, therefore, a critical time to focus on promoting women's status in the world of work, so that the past achievements are not undone.
- To review the past progress and suggest a way forward.

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2

## Topics of Discussion

- Gender equality and the world of work
- Gender dimensions of recent employment trends – impact of recent crisis
- Gender and working poverty
- Economic policies, employment and poverty: Gender dimensions
- ILO's instruments for poverty alleviation and advancing gender equality
- Conclusions

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3

## Gender equality and the world of work

- Gender equality at the heart of Decent Work Agenda -- cross cutting priority.
- Without gender equality, no **Decent Work** could be achieved.
- ILO's International Labour Standards on gender equality: Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (no. 100), and Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (no. 111).
- UN-CEDAW also prohibits all forms of discrimination against women (ratified by 187 countries).

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4

## Gender equality and the world of work

- **Grounds of discrimination under Convention no. 111 – Discrimination: race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin.**
- **Women can face double/triple discrimination: sex and other grounds.**

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5

## Gender equality and the world of work

- **Share of women in global workforce: 40 per cent.**
- **Narrowing gender gaps: women's participation in wage employment has slowly increased over the last 20 years.**
- **But wage gaps persist – women earn 10-30% less.**
- **Gender-segregation in labour market also persists.**
- **Women tend to be more under- and unemployed than men, particularly in developing regions.**
- **Youth – both women and men are equally affected by higher unemployment rates than adults.**
- **Women are more concentrated in jobs with lower pay, security and prestige\*.**

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\* *Women in labour markets: Measuring progress and identifying challenges* (ILO, Geneva, 2010)

6

## Gender equality and the world of work

- Women are also grossly under-represented in executive positions.
- While progress has been made, in many countries, women are less educated than men on average. And even in countries where women are better educated, this has not translated into better labour market outcomes.

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7

## Gender equality and the world of work

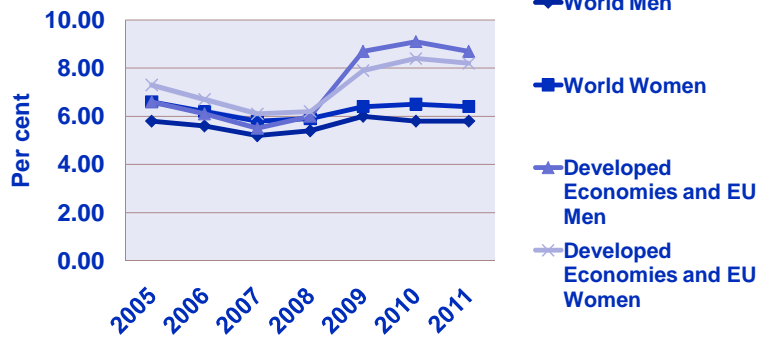
- Women also continue to bear most of double burden of productive and reproductive work– main providers of **Care**.
- Women's access to productive assets, resources and services remains more limited than for men.
- Persistent social institution dictating roles of women and men at home, in the community and in the world of work – discrimination against girls/women.
- As a consequence, women are over-represented among the poor and more affected by Decent Work deficits.

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8

## Gender dimensions of recent employment trends

Figure 1. Unemployment in the world, developed economies and EU by sex (per cent)



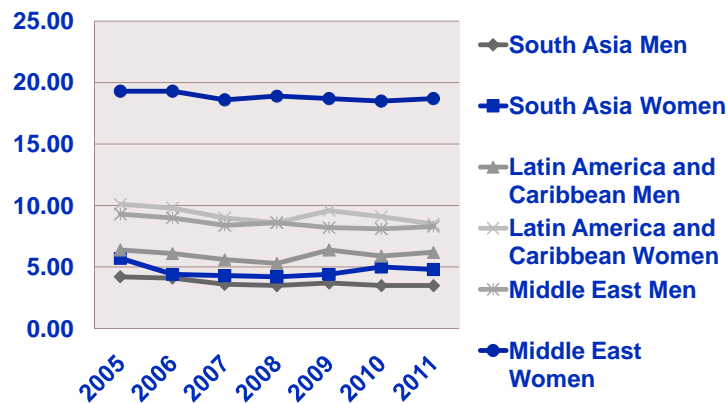
Source: Global employment trends (ILO, Geneva, 2012)

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9

## Gender dimensions of recent employment trends

Figure 2. Unemployment in selected developing regions by sex (per cent)



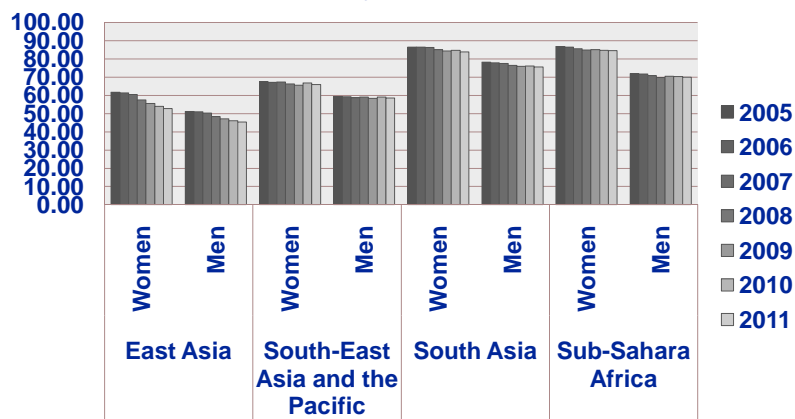
Source: Global employment trends (ILO, Geneva, 2012)

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10

## Gender dimensions of recent employment trends

Figure 3. Vulnerable employment, developing Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa by sex, 2005-2011 (per cent)



Source: Global employment trends (ILO, Geneva, 2012)  
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11

## Gender dimensions of recent employment trends

- Impact of 2008-09 global economic crisis on employment **in developing regions** largely through trade channels.
- Jobs in export sectors (higher concentration of women's jobs) affected: exp. Cambodia – some 33,570 laid off in T&C sector (**90% of labour force are women rural areas**).
- Women's re-entry to labour market more difficult than for men – employment opportunities less diversified.

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12

## Gender and working poverty

- Of 3 billion working population, estimated 455.8 million were in working poverty of living with less than US\$1.25/day (14.8% in 2011).
- Estimated 911.5 million workers were below working poverty line of US\$2/day (29.5% in 2011).
- Working poverty in developing regions: East Asia (7.8%), South East Asia + Pacific (11.1%), South Asia (35.9%), and Sub-Saharan Africa (38.1%)\*.
- Poverty has a woman's face: A large majority of the world's poor are women.

\* Global employment trends (ILO, Geneva, 2012)

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13

## Gender and working poverty

1. PC *Poverty is multi-dimensional*

2. PC + CPR

3. PC + CPR + SPC

4. PC + CPR + SPC + Assets

5. PC + CPR + SPC + Assets + Dignity

6. PC + CPR + SPC + Assets + Dignity + Autonomy

Figure 1: A Pyramid of Poverty Concepts. (Baulch 1996).

(Note: PC=Private consumption, CPR = common property consumption, SP = state provided consumption)

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14

## Gender and working poverty

- « Freedom » and « Security » could be added from the **Decent Work** perspective.
- Gender dimensions cut across all these aspects of poverty.
- Less development - correlated to more gender inequality.
- Costs of gender inequality in development – underutilization of women’s human potential and capabilities.

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15

## Gender and working poverty

- Most working poor are found in the urban informal and rural economies.
- Much of women’s work in agriculture is unpaid – **feminization** of agriculture observed in some countries.
- Women are a large majority in the informal economy in many countries: invisible, low pay and productivity, outside of protection and labour laws, etc.

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16



## Gender and working poverty

- Much of poor women's work (**both paid and unpaid**) remains unaccounted for, women are unorganized, neither represented, nor do they have an equal voice as men – **Decent Work deficits**.
- Girls, and young and old women are at higher risk of poverty.



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17

## Gender and working poverty

### Factors affecting persistent poverty:

- Impacts of **increasing global crises**, pandemic of HIV/AIDS, natural and environmental catastrophes, reduced social support in transition economies, etc.
- Increasing numbers of women/girls in **vulnerable groups**: migrant workers, domestic workers, those trafficked into the sex sector, etc.

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18

# Gender and working poverty

## Policy implications...

- Addressing **gender dimensions** in poverty alleviation --- critical.
- Laissez-faire approach to economic growth and employment creation will not automatically translate into poverty reduction, particularly, of **discriminated groups**.
- After a period of market driven economic policies, governments have bailed out **too-big-to-fail banks**, narrowing fiscal apace – feminists' call for alternative macroeconomic frameworks, or for “**just economy**” and more **inclusive growth**.
- Getting macroeconomic framework “right” - enabling environment for **gender justice**, and **well-being of people**.

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19

# Economic policies, employment and poverty: Gender dimensions

- **Promoting employment** – most effective way of reducing income and material poverty, including for poor women. But, **quality of employment** also matters.
- “**Pro-poor**” **growth** = high employment content: **Gender dimensions** are crucial.
- Past neoliberal macro-policies implemented in poor developing countries – subject to much criticism by feminist economists, in particular.

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20

## Economic policies, employment and poverty: Gender dimensions

- Past decade of globalization period coincided with increasing income inequality, feminization of labour market and a declining share of labour income (ILO, 2008).
- Level of exports – pro-cyclical impact on women’s employment. Policies favouring exports – positive impact on women’s employment (Berik, 2000, Heintz, 2006).

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21

## Economic policies, employment and poverty: Gender dimensions

- But trade liberalization in general, involving import substitution – the net engendered impacts could vary, depending on where men/women are. (Example: employment trends in post MFA and crisis periods in developing countries (Otoabe, 2008)
- **Monetary policies:** frequently reducing inflation has a negative impact on employment growth – more negative impact on women’s employment.
- **Fiscal policies:** bigger government spending – pro-employment growth – i.e. narrowing fiscal space (Heintz, 2006) – also not good news for women’s employment

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22

## Economic policies, employment and poverty: Gender dimensions

- Public sector reforms could have **differentiated impacts** on women/men, depending on the share of women in the sector and how the “right sizing” is implemented.
- When men are more substantially affected by retrenchments, the impact on women can be indirect – “**added worker**” effect.
- Trends of “**informalization of labour**” in many countries – related to persistent poverty in the world (Benería, 2001, 2008). In crises – this has been observed (Aswicahyono, et al, 1999, Dejillas, 2000).

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23

## ILO's instruments for poverty alleviation and advancing gender equality

- Integrated approach through **Decent Work agenda**: Decent and productive employment, social protection, legal and policy reforms enhancing equality/protection, and organization building.
- Means of action: Standard setting, technical cooperation, and research/advocacy.
- **Decent Work Agenda** covers these.

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24

## ILO's instruments for poverty alleviation and advancing gender equality

- Various types of intervention for poverty reduction:
  - ◆ Pro-poor (women) and pro-employment macro-policies
  - ◆ Distribution of capital (fiscal policies)
  - ◆ Social transfers and government-funded public employment promotion schemes (call for a universal **social protection floor**)
  - ◆ Enhancing human capital equitably (health, education, skills)
  - ◆ Improving productivity of labour in rural and informal economies, SMEs development (+ transition to formality)
  - ◆ Increasing equal labour market access and reducing labour market vulnerability – equal access to social protection
  - ◆ Organization of the poor, esp. women – voice and representation
  - ◆ Promotion of labour rights of the working poor, particularly of rural women.

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25

## ILO's instruments for poverty alleviation and advancing gender equality

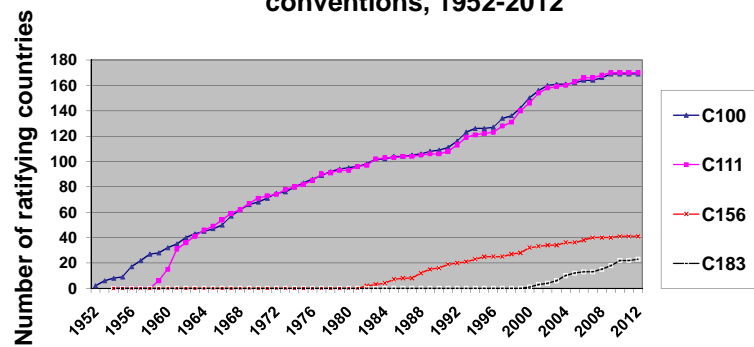
- International Labour Standards (ILS) with direct relevance to poverty alleviation:
  - ◆ **Minimum Wage Convention, 1970 (no. 131),**
  - ◆ **Rural Workers' Organizations Convention, 1975 (No. 141),**
  - ◆ **Indigenous and Tribal Peoples Convention, 1989 (no. 169).**
  - ◆ **Home Work Convention, 1996 (no. 177),**  
**Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (no. 189)**  
– specific significance for poor working women.

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26

## ILO's instruments for poverty alleviation and advancing gender equality

Figure 4: Number of ratification: Key equal rights conventions, 1952-2012



(Note: Equal remuneration Convention, 1951 (no. 100), Discrimination Convention (Employment and Occupation), 1968 (no. 111), Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156), Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (no. 183)

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27

## Conclusions

- Globally, despite progress made, women continue to suffer from more **Decent Work deficits and poverty** than men.
- Addressing gender equality concerns in poverty alleviation is *sin qua non* choice for the ILO (also for other UN and development organizations).
- Integrating normative principles (**equal rights**) in development and poverty alleviation: right thing to do.

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28

# Conclusions

- Need to pay attention to the nexus between economic growth, employment trends and poverty reduction, especially **gender dimensions**.
- Need to keep track on “**engendered**” impact of macroeconomic policies on employment, labour market, **unpaid work + well-being of people**.
- **Urgent response/measures** needed in the on-going economic crises to help the poor (especially women) in developing countries.
- Governments need to **bail out the poor**, not just the major banks.

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29

# Conclusions

- Gender mainstreaming in the ILO and other UN organizations, emphasizing also **poor women’s agency** in development - a long term positive impact on gender equality, women’s well-being and overall poverty eradication.
- An integrated approach can be undertaken in the framework of “Operationalizing” **Decent Work** at the national level – through **One UN approach**.

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30



*Thank you for your  
attention!!*

Visit our web site at: <http://www.ilo.org/employment/areas/gender-and-employment/lang-en/index.htm>

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31