

# **Mainstreaming gender into the global employment agenda**

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## **Introduction**

Promoting gender equality is central to the ILO's Decent Work Agenda and is an issue of fundamental human rights and of social justice. The Global Employment Agenda, as the employment element of the Decent Work Agenda, needs therefore to promote gender equality. The focus of this paper is primarily concerned with the gender mainstreaming of the current Global Employment Agenda- that is with identifying the ways in which gender interests should be introduced into the current policy programmes to illuminate their effects and to identify ways of designing general employment policies that may promote or at least not decrease gender equality. A further concern is to identify how gender interests can be introduced into the policymaking arena, in part through remedying the gender representation gap. In addition, there is undoubtedly a need for gender specific policies but these have not, by and large, been included in the Global Employment Agenda and as such it is only possible to indicate general areas where they may be necessary. As the Global Employment Agenda has so far been developed without any sustained gender analysis of the policy programme nor of the social dialogue through which the agenda should be implemented, our task is primarily to address these gaps and to identify issues for further development of the global employment agenda.

Gender mainstreaming requires the articulation of a clear framework for the introduction of gender analysis and gender effects into each element of the global employment agenda. The purpose of gender mainstreaming is taken to be twofold:

- to promote gender equality;
- and to improve our understanding of the effectiveness and impacts of policies.

The promotion of gender equality must take precedence in policy terms over the efficiency-enhancing potential of gender mainstreaming. However, the need for policy makers to develop a 'gender reflex' in order to understand their own policies and the environment in which they are operating must not be neglected. Moreover, the adoption of a gender mainstreaming approach can be potentially transformative, through the impact of requiring policymakers to rethink their policy approaches and the interconnections between the different elements of policy (Council of Europe 1998, Rees 1998). The focus on promoting gender equality tends to favour the promotion of women's rights but it is important to remember that a gender perspective also has some potential benefits for men if it reduces pressure to conform to gendered social norms that constrain men as well as women (UNRISD 2005).

To realise this potential we need first to develop a framework for gender mainstreaming that identifies the basis of gender differences and the potential impact that a gender perspective is likely to have on the key goals of the Global Employment Agenda- promoting decent work to further the reduction of poverty and the achievement of development. In the second part we take a more detailed look at how a gender perspective provides new insights into the different elements of the Global Employment Agenda and strengthens the case for the ILO to develop a distinctive contribution through its focus on decent work to the overall debate on how to reduce poverty and promote development capacities.

## **1. A conceptual framework for gender mainstreaming of the Global Employment Agenda**

The adoption of a gender perspective is always essential where there are significant and systematic differences in the positions, life opportunities, behaviour and capabilities for action of men and women. Under these conditions it is not possible without such a perspective to fully appreciate either the efficiency or the equity impacts of changes in economic conditions or of new policy approaches. Systematic differences between men and women are to be found in:

- i) their current positions in work and employment,
- ii) in the relationships between their work and employment and the incidence of poverty
- iii) in their capabilities to engage with employment opportunities and development opportunities more generally.

The Global Employment Agenda in its concern to promote decent work has a central interest in gender differences in both access to employment and quality of employment conditions. The GEA is also concerned with how developments in employment and decent work impact upon the form and extent of poverty. Gender issues enter this poverty agenda as men and women have different relationships both to the labour market and the family. It is through these interactions between work and employment and the organisation of the family or household that the linkage to poverty has to be made. Furthermore the GEA is part of a general development agenda and in order to seize opportunities for development it is necessary to ensure that appropriate policies, resources and infrastructure are available. Here gender differences enter into the capacities for men and women both to engage in the development agenda and indeed to shape that agenda through representation in civic society. The case to be made here is thus that a gender perspective assists in the three related objectives of promoting decent work, reducing poverty and creating the capacity for development. In each section we identify the key areas of gender difference and then consider the main ways in which this gender perspective needs to be integrated into the ILO's Global Employment Agenda, interpreted as involving a decent work, a poverty and a development dimension. The second part of this report takes up these implications of a gender perspective for the decent work, poverty and development agendas, linking the issues back into the specific ten elements of the Global Employment Agenda.

### ***1.1 Gender and employment and the decent work agenda***

*i) identifying gender differences in work and employment*

Gender differences in work and employment are found at a number of levels, such that men and women differ :

- in their level of involvement in both the monetised economy and the unpaid or non monetised economy
- within the monetised economy, in their level of involvement in the formal and the informal sectors
- within each of the formal, the informal and the unpaid segments of work, in tasks that they perform and the conditions under which they work due to processes of gender segregation and gender discrimination.

As a consequence of these multiple levels of gender difference, it is impossible to envisage a policy programme that impacts upon work and employment that is likely to be even handed or non gendered in its effects.

"Macroeconomic policies are mediated through a system of gendered job segregation: an important factor, even where there is an otherwise level playing field between women and men in terms of qualifications, skills and control of assets. While there is some variation in country-specific conditions, job segregation between paid and unpaid labour, and within paid labour markets -- by occupation as well as industry -- continues to be globally pervasive, a tendency that has shown little sign of abating." (UNRISD 2005:35)

Moreover, the patterns of gender segregation within the types of work are not simply linked to differences in skills and occupations but also linked to multiple levels of disadvantage. Women's position in the labour market is more likely to be regarded as contingent, and thereby precarious; women are much less likely to be protected by formal employment systems and by rights to redundancy, unemployment benefits or active labour market policies; women's work in each sector tends to be rewarded with lower earnings and ascribed lower status. Women in developing countries are more likely to be found in small and medium-sized enterprises than in the large formal sectors in the private and public spheres. Differences among women in their employment position also need to be taken into account, such that differences can be found between younger and older women, between mothers and non mothers, rural and urban women, migrants and non migrants, women in local production and women in the global production chain. However, these differences between women do not obviate the need for a gender analysis for within each group -- whether migrant workers, local economy workers or manufacturing factory workers -- gender differences still prevail.

*ii) Implications for the employment and decent work agenda*

Gender differences in both access to and rewards for employment need to be taken into account in the ILO's employment and decent work agenda if these policy programmes are to be both inclusive and effective.

As we discuss further below, gender needs to be integrated into the analysis of both issues of access to employment and of improvements in the quality of work, or decent work. Particular attention needs to be paid to minimum standards in both the formal and the informal sectors, an issue at the centre of the ILO's decent work agenda. Gender issues need to be taken into account in analysing the dynamics of employment opportunities, and in particular the role of women in the internationalisation or globalisation of economies. Thus, while many women are primarily engaged in the local economy, women are also playing a more than disproportionate role in some sectors in the development of international production systems for commodities and services. Similarly, while women with responsibility for children may be engaged primarily in tasks that can be combined with home production, in many developing countries young women are playing a major role in patterns of migration from rural to urban areas and across national borders.

## ***1.2. Gender and the household: the key linkage between employment and poverty***

### *i) identifying gender differences in the linkages between work and employment and poverty*

Men and women have different relationships both to the labour market and to the family. It is at the level of the family or household that the problem of poverty becomes directly manifest. It is through an analysis of gendered relations both in work and employment and in family and household organisation that both the processes that generate poverty and those that can lead to poverty reduction can be understood.

The linkages between gender difference and poverty affect individual risks of poverty and household and societal risks. There are two distinct roles that women play in forging links between work and employment and poverty for other household members and for the society in general. First of all women are in many parts of the world primarily responsible for food production and securing of food for the family (UNCTAD 1999) ; policies to avoid extreme poverty must take into account women's role in food provisioning and, likewise, policies aimed at restructuring local agricultural production must consider the implications for women's provisioning roles. Secondly, women are the main carers of children and there are potential strong links between women's access to employment and resources and the prevention of poverty amongst children.

While women's employment and work are critical to the prevention of poverty within households and the wider society, little policy attention is paid women's own higher risk of poverty that arises both out of their disadvantaged position in the employment and work sphere and out of the uneven burdens of care and provisioning work between men and women in the household. These higher risks of being individually without adequate income are assumed to be taken care of or socialised by the family rather than by the state. Thus much of the inequality by gender experienced in the formal and informal segments of the labour market is not taken seriously by those concerned with poverty because it is presumed that many women will be being supported by higher paid and more secure male partners. In some cases this link is made explicit: for example in the UK the Conservative government defended its decision to abolish wages councils which set minimum wages in selected sectors,

precisely on the grounds that most of the workers were women and were not in low income households (Machin and Manning 1996).

This presumption that women are able to be economically reliant on the family results in high levels of poverty for those women who find themselves solely dependent upon their ability to sell their own labour in order to survive. Many women who were at some stage in their lives supported by a higher paid male partner may find themselves at another stage in their life a major or even sole breadwinner due to the sickness or death of their partner or as a consequence of male unemployment in conditions of economic recession in male-dominated activities. Their lack of access to employment and wage income at the earlier stage may inhibit their ability to take on these roles at a later stage. Women's poverty in old age is in part a result of the disadvantage that women face in the labour market and economy and their greater involvement in unpaid work throughout their working lives. While some of the problems for women emerge when traditional family structures break down, there are also continuing problems of intra-household inequality, reinforced by unequal rights for women in access to family property.

#### *ii) Implications for the poverty agenda*

One of the main objectives of the ILO is to link its employment and decent work agendas into the new millennium strategies of poverty reduction and the achievement of development goals. A gender perspective highlights the labour market and the household arrangements that together interact to shape risks of poverty in the short and the longer term, for both households and individuals. In order to make the gender dimensions of the linkages between employment and poverty clear, poverty analysis needs to focus not only on households but also on men and women as individuals. As most households consist of at least one man and one woman, the use of the household as the main unit of analysis tends to obscure and hide gender differences and gender dynamics over the lifecycle. Furthermore, the focus on the family also needs to be dynamic. In developing and developed countries the patterns of family formation are changing. In developing economies there are moves to more nuclear family formation with mixed consequences for women. While more able to operate outside the traditional control exercised, for example, by their mother in law, they are more isolated and less able to draw on sources of family support during periods of childcare. In developed countries cohabitation is increasing and the age of first marriage rising, along with divorce rates. These changes increase the risks of relying on male earnings as a means of support.

### ***1.3 Gender and the development agenda***

#### *i) Gender and capabilities for employment and development*

The notion of capabilities has become an important concept in considering both the objectives of development and in exploring differences within developing countries of the impact of development strategies and policies. Capabilities have been interpreted as "a kind of freedom: the substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations" (Sen 1999: 75). Capabilities, however, do not simply reflect the

potential of individuals or even their current endowments and motivations but are dependent on access to resources, defined in the wider sense to include social resources and social capital, that enable them to make use of their potential and to realise their aspirations.

It can be argued that one can anticipate a particularly strong gender difference in the opportunities to develop capabilities due to differences by gender in access to both physical and to social resources. The most important differences in access to physical resources include access to wealth and indeed to credit, access to health and education and to transport. Some of the restrictions are related to women's more limited involvement in the monetised economy, some to lower priorities established in family and households towards the development of women or girls with respect to education and health, and some differences derive from gender differences in the distribution of time and responsibilities in adult life. For example, women's horizons with respect to travel and to the labour market may be limited by their allocated role as domestic provisioners and carers. In some cases women's more restricted access to property and wealth may be reinforced by outdated laws and social norms on property rights by gender.

Development strategies also need to address issues of labour supply, reproduction and migration. The labour supply in the short and the long-term is of considerable importance for the global employment agenda. Women's particular role in family formation and fertility must thus be considered. Women's fertility is not independent of women's access to employment and resources. In some contexts the increased employment opportunities for women may reduce fertility while in others it may provide the security for family formation (Esping-Andersen 2002). Differences in the linkages between employment and fertility can be expected between developing and developed economies but this important dimension to the global employment agenda should not be neglected. There are also distinct gender dimensions to both internal and external patterns of labour migration, again with implications for employment issues.

#### *ii) Implications for the development agenda*

There are two implications for the development agenda from this 'capability' approach: first for the individual, opportunities cannot be fully utilised unless the individual has access to complementary resources; second for the society as a whole, the wider processes of development will not be successful unless the development strategies themselves are embedded more strongly in civic society and build upon existing social capital (Fukuda-Parr, Lopes and Malik 2002). Gender deficits can be expected in both access to complementary resources and in involvement in civic society and social capital. These individual and societal level resources and representation issues are interlinked: it is men that have better access to networks and resources both inside and outside of the immediate family and household sphere. Policies to build upon and develop social capital, without measures to involve more women, could therefore exacerbate gender difference. Similarly the involvement of civic society including the whole range of formal and informal social groupings, could lead to further exclusion of women from participation in decision-making if this engagement builds solely upon existing collective strengths and formal groups.

In considering the overall development strategy it is also essential to identify the extent to which developing countries' involvement in global production chains is linked to current conditions in the labour market- including gender discrimination or gender difference as well as general levels of regulation of the labour market. For example, Seguino (2000) has made the argument that in some cases success international trade may be directly linked to the undervaluation of female labour in developing countries.

Finally there is a need to address the potential impact of development paths on both fertility and migration, through a gender sensitive analysis of development in both economic conditions and household arrangements that impinge on fertility and migration patterns.

## **2. Integrating a gender perspective into the Global Employment Agenda.**

As we have already noted, gender mainstreaming has two main goals: one to promote gender equality, the second to use a gender analysis to improve and develop the policy agenda. The integration of gender into the Global Employment Agenda should therefore seek to enhance and extend the distinctive ILO focus on employment as a means of achieving decent work, poverty reduction and development for all. The Global Employment Agenda is centrally concerned with the promotion of decent work across the world. The task is first to identify in what ways the gender perspective can help both to clarify the issues confronting the promotion of decent work and to identify how policies need to be modified or changed to promote gender equality as one dimension to decent work. The emphasis on poverty reduction and good governance under the new millennium development goals in principle provides a more favourable environment for the promotion of the importance of employment and decent work in the achievement of these objectives but there has still been a relative neglect of both employment and gender issues. There have been difficulties in integrating employment and gender issues into Poverty Reduction Strategic Plans (PRSPs) (UNRISD 2005) reflecting a low level of consultation with women's groups and little evidence of efforts to bridge representation gaps with respect to gender. The argument to be made here is that the strengthening of the gender dimension to the Global Employment Agenda should also contribute to the understanding of the linkages between the employment agenda and the development goals, thereby placing employment issues more at the heart of the development debate.

The Global Employment Agenda currently has ten core elements.

CE 1-promoting trade, foreign investment and productive employment in developing countries

CE 2: promoting technological change for higher productivity and job creation and improved standards of living

CE 3: promoting sustainable development for sustainable livelihoods\*

CE 4: macro economic policy for growth and employment: a call for policy integration

CE 5: promoting decent employment through entrepreneurship

CE 6: employability by improving knowledge and skills\*

CE 7: active labour market policies for employment, security in change, equity and poverty reduction

CE 8: social protection as a productive factor\*

CE 9: occupational safety and health: synergies between security and productivity\*

CE 10: productive employment for poverty reduction and development

\*not yet developed as a detailed policy agenda

Godfrey (2005) has suggested that there is considerable overlap and interchangeability among some of these core elements. Furthermore only six of these core elements have so far been developed into detailed analyses and agendas for change. Here we thus attempt a synthetic approach by identifying the contributions of the gender analysis to the Global Employment Agenda under the three issues of gender, employment and decent work; gender, the household and poverty; and gender, employment and development capabilities<sup>1</sup>. A system of cross-referencing is used to indicate where the issues identified are currently discussed or should be discussed under the ten core elements.

## ***2.1 Introducing a gender perspective on employment and decent work into the ten core elements.***

To understand the main gender issues for decent work within the Global Employment Agenda, we have divided the topics under gender and access to decent work on the one hand and gender and employment policy on the other. This division is to some extent artificial but it allows for a more sustained analyses of the implications for policy programmes, once the patterns and trends in access to decent work have been analysed. The linkages to the ten core elements are made by reference to the number of the element as specified above.

### **2.1.1 Gender and access to decent work**

Here we subdivide the analysis further into three main themes: internationalisation and globalisation, structure and demand for employment and types of employment,

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<sup>1</sup> The main sources used for this review are as follows: ILO Governing Body papers relating to the global employment agenda, including the Review of the core elements of the Global Employment Agenda GB.286/ESP/1(Rev.) (ILO 2003a) and the six background policy papers relating to six of the core elements of the GEA namely trade and investment GB.291/ESP/2 (ILO 2004c), technology GB.292/ESP/3 (ILO 2005), macroeconomic policy GB.291/ESP/1 (ILO 2004d), entrepreneurship GB.289/ESP/1 (ILO 2004a), active labour market policies GB.288/ESP/2 (ILO 2003b) and poverty reduction GB.289/ESP/2 (ILO 2004b) (**detailed analysis of the gender issues embedded in the ten core elements are provided in the appendix**); a review of the global employment agenda carried out for the ILO by Godfrey (2005); the UNRISD report on *Gender Equality* published 2005 and several of the unpublished working papers for that report (in particular those by Braunstein 2005 and Packard 2005); the report on the pre-UNCTAD expert workshop on trade, sustainable development and gender TD (X)/PC/2 (1999); reports by the author relating to gender mainstreaming in the European Employment Strategy; and selected publications in academic journals and books.



identifying the main core elements of the GEA to which these themes apply (see also appendix).

*i) Internationalisation/ globalisation (core elements 1,3)*

The internationalisation and globalisation of developing economies is the first core element of the Global Employment Agenda. In analysing the impact of these processes on developing countries it is essential to map the internal restructuring of the division of labour between international, national and local and informal modes of production. These changes are not gender neutral but often have strong impacts on both women's and men's access to employment and wage income.

Women in fact are disproportionately represented in the development of internationally oriented manufacturing, particularly in export processing zones and in textiles and clothing but also in off-shoring of services and the growth of pink collar work. This involvement of women in global production chains also has implications for their own and other women's role in the domestic wage and non wage economy. A key issue for the decent work agenda is to understand the impact of internationalisation and globalisation on developing countries but these gender effects call for an analysis that is also differentiated by gender. These gender effects appear to vary over time and by country. There are mixed views on whether or not the development of export trade and foreign direct investment has led to improvements or deterioration in women's employment position. For some commentators it is the low pay and the presumed ease of disposability of female labour that makes it more attractive to foreign direct investment (Seguino 2000, Standing 1989, 1999). On the other hand opportunities to work in export oriented sectors may in some conditions enhance women's economic autonomy (Kabeer 2004). However, Lim's view (1990) that women employed in the export sector are "unambiguously better off" is not fully supported by the empirical evidence, according to a survey by Braunstein (2005). The assessment depends in part upon the frame of reference deployed: whether the comparison is to local alternatives or to 'human development standards', that is conditions of work that in some absolute sense can be considered decent. Gains are also not always sustained: some evidence points to an erosion over time. For example the female share of employment declined in the 1980s in Malaysia, South Korea and Philippines according to Joeke (1999) and in the maquiladora fell from 77% in 1980 to only 41% in 1999 (Fussell 2000), although the total numbers employed increases from 100,000 to 750,000. Similar arguments apply to wages, with earnings in export processing zones initially being higher than those in the local economy but over time converging to local levels although still providing more stable earnings (UNCTC/ILO 1988, Fussell 2000). Widening wage inequality appears as one result of engagement of developing countries in international production chains and globalisation of markets; such trends tend to widen gender pay gaps.

Furthermore while the development of international trade is drawing more women into international production systems the same processes of globalisation are having some negative effects on women's role in the local economy and local food production. There is a need to analyse the impact of international trade development and foreign direct investment on the informal economy and indeed the unpaid economy; consideration of the impact only on the formal economy may be to minimise the attention paid to female-specific effects of changes in the organisation of production associated with the opening up of the economy to trade and investment.

Part of the evaluation should include consideration of the effect of volatility in foreign direct investment on women. Globalisation not only involves the outsourcing from developed to developing countries but may also lead to further switching of production when new markets and opportunities for further reductions in costs open up.

*ii) Employment demand (core elements 4, 8)*

Because of women's different position in the labour market, any changes in the level and/or composition of demand is likely to have gender effects (UNRISD 2005). Thus macroeconomic policy, the subject of core element four, is highly unlikely to be gender neutral. Moreover because women face even greater problems of lack of work, insecurity of work and insecurity in rights, they may face an even greater likelihood of being affected by structural adjustment (GB.291/ESP/1 paragraph 17).

Macroeconomic and structural adjustment policies also have many gender effects that remain invisible unless looked for directly: for example, women are more likely to be employed in jobs offering minimum wage levels so any policy to control minimum wage levels to stabilise the economy and/or control public expenditure when minimum wages are linked to benefit levels, may have disproportionate impacts on women (Rubery 2003). Where macroeconomic policies aim to change the volume of public services and/or the level of private sector involvement in their provision, gender employment effects can be anticipated even if these will vary by country; for example women may dominate public sector employment in developed economies but men may have more involvement in the public sector in developing economies.

Counter-cyclical macroeconomic policy operated through social protection systems (core element 8) also has different effects by gender because women are less often openly unemployed and less often in receipt of benefits on grounds of unemployment. They may also have less access to employment generation or employment guarantee policies.

*iii) Types of employment (core elements 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10)*

Access to quality employment- that is defined by working conditions, wage and employment security is central to the decent work agenda and is a key issue in at least six of the core elements of the GEA. Women's greater propensity to be excluded from 'decent work' and to be employed in informal, low wage, low productivity, unprotected forms of activity- both as employees and as small business and self employed workers- is a critical issue for the GEA where the objective is to promote decent work and eliminate discrimination. Thus gender issues come in to the core elements of promoting access to social protection through employment (CE 8), promoting health and safety at work (CE 9) and above all in reducing risk of poverty (CE 10) and promoting sustainable livelihoods (CE 3), that must involve promoting sustainable and secure livelihoods. Promotion of entrepreneurship (CE 5) also needs to address the gender issue as women are often involved in small enterprises frequently operating at a subsistence level within the informal economy. Much of this activity may be as Ghosh (2004) suggests, the outcome of a strategy by employers to avoid minimum labour standards. Here there may be a close connection between the utilisation of female labour and the organisation of production using the informal economy. The size of enterprise also links to the issues of social protection, where

informal sector firms are less likely to be covered by social security systems, and indeed to occupational health and safety. Furthermore women are also vulnerable to sexual harassment at work, a factor which undermines their safety and health.

Women are already less likely to be employed in sectors or organisations covered by social protection and social policy but there is a danger that moves to increase flexibility of the labour market may involve excluding certain jobs and sectors from social security contributions which can result in further gender segmentation on social protection lines. Furthermore social protection over the period of maternity is important both to maintain the health of women and to provide opportunities for employment continuity. Where women are forced to discontinue employment they often suffer considerable occupational downgrading when re-entering employment (Olsen and Walby 2004).

Gender segregation, in turn often linked to issues of access to training and also to gender stereotyping, underpin gender inequalities in access to decent work. Promotion of gender equality in access to new technologies to promote employability and reduce gender segregation is thus vital (CE 2). However, it must also be remembered that while women in many developing countries may lack access to developing new skills required by new technologies, even where women do develop skills they are not necessarily recognised and rewarded as skilled in the employment systems. This social construction of skill is important for understanding both the role of technological change and gender segregation and gender pay differences. Application of new technologies may not raise the required skill level in the sense of the time taken to learn the task but may lead to increases in productivity, independent of skill in the conventional sense of learning time. This higher productivity or higher value-added per employee is often regarded as constituting an increase in skill when the more appropriate term may be increased responsibility (Bettio 1988, Craig et al. 1985). Research suggests that women's skills compare more favourably to men's when indicators of conventional skills are used but less favourably when issues of responsibility for value added or resources are considered. This more complex approach to the linkages between skill, technological change and gender relations suggest that the displacement of women from higher value-added jobs may be due more to power relations and the appropriation of higher value added jobs by men than to issues of skills or competences. Thus there is a need to prevent the substitution of male for female labour where technology becomes less labour-intensive and more capital intensive, a phenomenon associated for example with the *maquiladora* (Fussell 2000).

### **2.1.2 Decent work policies**

#### *i) Supply-side/activation policies (core elements 4,5,6,7,10)*

Access to employment and entrepreneurship require the promotion of active labour market programmes (CE 7), improvements to employability through access to training (CE 6) and policies that promote access to complementary resources for entrepreneurship such as micro-finance (CE 5).

Active labour market programmes need to recognise that there are differences by gender in representation in the categories of unemployment and underemployment.

The contingent nature of women's relationship to the labour market may mean that problems of unemployment and underemployment are less evident as women may substitute unpaid work for paid work. As in developing countries active labour market policies may be aimed at the underemployed and those in the informal sector as much as at the openly unemployed, there may be less under-representation in principle of women among the target groups in developing than in developed countries; however it is an empirical question whether or not the active labour market policies aimed at the informal sector focus on female occupations and trades or on male-dominated ones. Even when the target group is the young or the old, the programmes need to be managed with a gender perspective in view as the problems facing young women may be quite different from young men and, similarly, the problems facing female older workers may be quite different from those facing male older workers. There is also a need to take structural changes that displace women from the labour market as seriously as those that displace men: there is clear evidence in developed countries that, for example, the restructuring of shipbuilding or steel has led to stronger active labour market interventions than the restructuring of textiles (Rubery et al. 1999). A particular issue to be addressed within the internationalisation/globalisation part of the agenda is therefore the support provided to those affected by, for example, changes in the quotas in international trade for textiles and garments.

The core element to promote employability through enhancing skills and knowledge needs to focus on upgrading not only the quality of labour supply but also the quality of the work environment, including the development of more challenging and empowering forms of work and the provision of access to training. These challenges apply particularly to many areas of women's work which have been constituted as low productivity and highly controlled forms of work.

Under the entrepreneurship agenda, there is a need for promotion of equality in access to resources, including property, land, credit as well as education and training. Access to resources is particularly important in promoting entrepreneurship and in increasing the productivity and security of informal work.

#### *ii) Labour standards (core elements 1, 4, 5, 8, 9, 10)*

The promotion of labour standards is central to the ILO's decent work agenda, and to its *raison d'être* within the UN system; it is equally important for the promotion of gender equity, given the problems that women face by operating in the most disadvantaged segments of the labour market. In developing countries this importance is sometimes disputed as labour standards are more often only apparently observed in the formal sector. The Global Employment Agenda is currently rather silent about the need to promote decent work through minimum wages legislation and enforcement. In developed countries there are clear arguments that minimum wages are critical in establishing an appropriate floor to the labour market particularly for women, especially where collective bargaining organisation is limited. In developing countries the concentration of women in the informal sector may be regarded as making the setting of labour standards and a minimum wage rather less clearly female-friendly, particularly if it is argued that employment is more important than wages in developing countries and that minimum wages may distort the market by fixing wages above the market wage. However, in labour surplus economies the concept of the market wage is hard to define and the issue of exploitation of labour in conditions of

labour surplus may be equally pertinent. Moreover, the argument that setting a minimum wage reduces the prevailing wage rate in the informal sector by displacing workers from the formal to the informal sector is based on rather limited empirical evidence. Some research suggests the development of wage norms within the informal sector is influenced by the level of minimum wages set for the formal sector (ILO 2004e: para.15). Much of the debate on minimum wages in any case misses the obvious link between low wages and the gender pay gap. The debate on minimum wages has tended not to take the issue of gender discrimination seriously and the focus instead is on notions of labour market equilibrium, even in a context where there is widespread debate about discrimination by gender and the need to tackle the gender pay gap. These issues have been explored in depth as background work for the ILO report on the declaration with respect to discrimination (Rubery 2003).

The overall argument, however, is that in developing a decent work perspective to the global employment agenda there needs to be specific attention paid to the role of labour standards in promoting gender equity. This approach should complement and deepen the notion of decent work as a productive factor; gender discrimination results in both low productivity and poverty (CE 10), so that action to facilitate better utilisation of female labour and appropriate rewards for effort should be at the base of the notion of decent work as a productive factor. Particular issues of direct significance for women's employment position that need to be addressed within the poverty and development agendas, as discussed further below, include:

- the scope for setting minimum standards- and at what level- within the export oriented zones, focused particularly on female labour (CE 1);
- the case for applying labour standards to the informal as well as the formal sector, that is by not accepting the setting of size or other thresholds for labour standards (preferring to simplify standards if necessary rather than to segment the market) (CE 5, CE 8, CE 9)
- the case for ensuring that labour standards do not become an instrument of macroeconomic policy but are set with reference to standards of fairness in the labour market (CE 4)

### *iii) Job quality and equal value policies (core elements 2, 5, 6)*

Gender equity policies in the decent work agenda need to go further than promoting access to employment and minimum labour standards. There is also a need to promote job quality for women throughout the job and wage hierarchy by ensuring not only that women obtain access to employment, to skills and to training but also ensuring that their skills, training and expertise are recognised and valued. Low valuation within organisations of particular activities is also likely to impact on low value attached to informal sector activities that provide similar or complementary services (CE 5). Within the core element 2 on technology and core element 6 on enhancing employability through skills and training, the focus needs to be not only on women gaining access to technology but also on ensuring that it is not only those with technical skills who are regarded as skilled or knowledgeable; in many areas technical skills need to be combined with organisational and social skills for real effectiveness. There is no necessary presumption that women are deficient in these sorts of skills and there may even be expectations that they might enjoy a comparative advantage. The important issue is therefore to try to ensure that women are not excluded from job areas simply because of a lack of technical skills, when these may constitute only a

small part of the job. Steps need to be taken to ensure women do have the opportunity to acquire these skills and the fact that men may perform better in this part of the job should not be seen as indicative of overall job performance.

## ***2.2. Introducing a gender perspective on employment, the household and poverty into the ten core elements.***

Women are disproportionately represented in poverty and their share of those in poverty has been increasing (CE 10). Furthermore women play a critical role in determining the risks of other family members falling into poverty, defined not only by receipt of wage income but by the standard of living provided for that income. A gender perspective enhances understanding of the linkages between the ten core elements and their impact on poverty through opening up the linkages between employment and productive activities on the one hand and standards of living and social organisation on the other. In particular, a gender perspective requires both a focus on individual as well as household risks of poverty and on the impact of non wage work on the quality of life and living standards. We divide our analysis under these two issues.

### ***2.2.1 Household and individual access to employment , income and social protection (core elements 3,5,6, 7,8,10)***

Women's position in the household impacts upon their access to employment, other forms of income and social protection. Employment opportunities for women are constrained by their gendered roles as care providers. Gender segregation and discrimination in the labour market further restrict opportunities for households to move away from the traditional gendered division of labour in the household as women are not usually able to obtain access to a 'breadwinner's wage'. At the same time these household influences on gender stereotypes and gender discrimination reinforce traditional division of labour in the household. These interactions between the employment systems and the household in confining women to low paid and insecure employment need to be stressed in the analysis of the factors contributing to poverty (CE10). These labour market effects, associated with the construction of women as second or marginal income earners, apply even to those who need to be 'breadwinners' such as single parents and reinforce women's primary responsibilities for non wage work.

Women are also often involved in unpaid or low paid roles within family enterprises, playing important roles in maintaining family livelihoods but enjoying relatively little economic autonomy (CE 5). Even when working on their own account, women's entrepreneurial activities often have to be combined with their household, caring and food provisioning responsibilities or roles. Women tend to operate subsistence enterprises and therefore are subject to extreme vulnerability (GB.289/ESP/1 paragraph 61); this extreme vulnerability is linked to women's limited opportunities in the monetised economy.

Women's traditional role in the family also restricts their access to complementary resources to enable them to develop their own economic independence. For example, a major cause of lack of capacity for women to engage in entrepreneurship is lack of access to finance and credit which in turn is related to inadequate property rights for

women (CE 5). Women's position in the family and household may restrict their access to education and training (CE 6). The prioritising of domestic work for girls and young women or their engagement in child labour may restrict the development of human resources and perpetuates low education literacy among subsequent generations (CE 3). These effects are in addition to the discrimination suffered by the women themselves. Gender roles in the household also shape patterns of migration and patterns of vulnerability of migrants to low pay and exploitation. For example, much migration is dependent upon the export of housemaids, an almost entirely feminised category of employment. Families and social norms play a major role in determining whether young women stay inside the household, enter the local labour market or form part of internal or international migration flows. Internal migration results in many young rural migrant women being vulnerable to low pay and exploitation in urban environments. Trafficking for prostitution is an extreme form of both international and national migration of young women under conditions of duress.

Women's household position also has a notable impact on their access to either passive or active social security or protection (CE 7, CE 8). In some cases these differences are due to political pressures: for example strong measures may be introduced to assist in the context of redundancy where the majority of the workforce being made redundant is identified as main breadwinners; there is less evidence of such interventions in jobs lost that are part-time, casual or taken indeed by women. In most cases, however, the gender differences are built into the design of statutory systems. An obvious example here is where there is no or insufficient support for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding; here the clear assumption is that women will be dependent upon family members. The current discussion of social protection in the GEA, in policy paper GB.289/ESP/2, refers to the need for income protection in sickness and old age but there is no mention of the need for protection for maternity. Most pension systems in developed economies not only provide for survival benefits for spouses but also provide inadequate support for women who do not have access to a partner's pension; this inadequacy is due to the expectation of full employment histories in full-time and reasonably well paid jobs.

Passive support systems are often based on the household not the individual, through the use of means tested benefits or as a consequence of requirements for participants to be continuous full-time labour market participants, without allowance being made for breaks due to the need to provide care or undertake household tasks. As women are often less eligible for passive income replacement support in both developed and developing countries, a focus on active labour market policies could benefit women proportionately more than men. However, although current policies to promote pro poor growth (CE 4) through active labour market policies are in general likely to benefit women than passive policies, there is still a risk that they may be targeted on the openly unemployed. Women may still be underrepresented as women are more often underemployed on casual, flexible work or engaged in household work. Godfrey (2005) has appointed to the absence of the discussion of rural employment guarantees as currently being considered in India. The question of whether or not access to this employment guarantees will be based on an individual or household basis is critical to its gender effects and it is not only the issue of employment guarantees but also their impact on women that need to be identified in the GEA; while limiting access to the

household might restrict women's access to some wage income, providing opportunities for women to be involved might also increase the work burdens on women if they are expected to undertake this external work for low wages while continuing with their traditional domestic work responsibilities.

The development of in-work benefits- sometimes known as employment-conditional benefits (OECD 2003)- in several European countries and the United States raises further issues with respect to the development of household instead of individualised benefits. The OECD (2003) has argued that household based in work benefits will tend to discourage participation by the second income earner, thereby reducing women's involvement in the labour market in couple households, even if the same policies have positive effects for female lone parents

‘Basing the benefit on overall household income may reduce the incentive for the spouse to work and such a risk may be crucial in those countries where non-employment is concentrated among spouses. However, this perverse effect may be attenuated when eligibility requirements are individually based.’ (OECD 2003:118).

The impact of active labour market policies on sustained employability (CE 3, CE 6) should not be considered simply from the labour market perspective but also from the availability of support for household responsibilities and care, particularly in the case of lone parents; active labour market policies that try to integrate lone parents into work may fail because of factors that may lead to high quit rates after job entry (Evans et al. 2004). The review of active labour market policies in the GEA (ILO 2003b) points to an increasing recognition that active labour market policies need to be differentiated to meet the needs of different groups of workers -- the notion that not one size fits all. This approach has the potential to stimulate the development of a broader approach to active labour market policies to include the necessary household and social support to facilitate integration into employment for those for example who are single parents or those with responsibilities for care for the elderly.

The focus on households and the presumption of a male breadwinner causes particular problems for female-headed households, a category that is tending to increase in developed countries and may also increase in particular contexts in developing countries, such as war zones and as a consequence of early death rates of partners due to AIDS and HIV. Attention also needs to be paid to single male households with responsibility for children as a consequence of the vulnerability of mothers to death from AIDS and HIV as well as childbirth.

### ***2.2.2 Quality of life, the domestic economy and the gender division of labour (CE 1, 3, 4, 5,10)***

It is at the household level where resources from the monetised and the non monetised economy come together to determine the quality or standard of life of the household members and thus the incidence of poverty. To understand poverty it is necessary to have both a household and an individual perspective; the household perspective is necessary to make visible the role of non paid work; the individual perspective is necessary to make visible the intra household division of resources and of labour and to understand the dynamics of poverty risks which operate at both an individual and a household level. Linkages also need to be made between gender issues and the



poverty risks of others: for example the GEA does not at the moment identify the link between the position of women in relation to employment and income and the poverty of children (CE 10).

Macroeconomic policies- particularly restrictive policies associated with structural adjustment and spending cuts,- have been argued to have a significant gender impact, such that a gender perspective needs to become a central part of structural adjustment policy analysis (Elson 1995). However, this approach is so far absent from the analysis of core element 4. It is at the family and household level that deficiencies in public expenditure have to be compensated for and it is women who are at the centre of the struggle to maintain standards of living in the context of structural adjustment. Furthermore, sustainable livelihoods requires consideration of the linkages between wage employment, family and household organisation and provisioning and sustainable standards of living and livelihoods (CE 3).

Furthermore, the role of the unpaid and the informal economy in promoting well-being and welfare needs to be taken into account in all attempts to measure growth rates and the effectiveness of pro poor growth policies (CE 4); unless these hidden sectors of the economy are made more visible, the impact of changes in the structure of the economy and in patterns of demand on the welfare of women and their dependants cannot be fully derived from changes in macroeconomic variables as normally classified. For example, guaranteed employment schemes may have implications for the extent of unpaid work within the household or other forms of informal work with direct consequences for household standards of living. These changes in the domestic division of labour, consequent upon changes in access to the monetised economy, need to be analysed from a gender perspective.

There is a general need to provide within the GEA a more sustained analysis of the gender and family division of labour across the different segments of the production systems including the : international, national, local divide; the formal, informal, unpaid divide; the urban, rural divide; the industrial, service, agricultural divide. These dimensions are overlapping and cross cutting but they often have strong gender dimensions that vary by country and over time and are linked to household structures and household divisions of labour. Such an analysis is required to understand the impacts of, for example, the growth of internationalisation of production systems. Although women have been strongly represented in those segments integrated into the international economy, the majority of women remain part of the rural poor and account for the majority of the rural poor. Here there may be negative effects of internationalisation or globalisation, with cheap food imports threatening local production. Where women are drawn into the cash crop agricultural sector, there are dangers that they are not rewarded appropriately for their labours, with negative effects on their ability to provide for themselves and the household. Moreover, there may be trade-offs between women's involvement in the export manufacturing sector and social and family development. The individual benefits that women derive from such involvement, particularly measured by economic autonomy (Kabeer 2004) may coexist with negative impacts on, for example, care provision for children. Equally, however, there may be positive spin-offs with children benefiting from the enhanced economic independence of their mothers. Furthermore, UNRISD (2005) suggests that in some countries rural agricultural has become increasingly feminised as a

consequence of a reduction in the viability of rural small holdings, causing male labour to seek alternative employment outside the rural economy and leaving women to manage the farms on their own account. This suggests a dynamic development of the gender division of labour at both a household and the wage economy level.

In discussing change at the household level and in gender relations it is important to address the interests and the behaviour of men. Many of the changes in social organisation that may follow from a gender equality perspective have positive consequences for individual men, offering them more scope to define their social and economic role according to their own preferences, allowing them to be carers as well as or instead of breadwinners. Moreover, changes that facilitate women's economic independence may also help to increase the economic security of the household, thereby reducing the breadwinning burdens on men. At the same time it should be recognised that a gender equality perspective necessarily challenges men's access to and control of resources and their power in economic, social and family life. As such the changes discussed here may be resisted by men at a societal or individual/household level.

### ***2.3.Introducing a gender perspective on employment and the development agenda into the ten core elements.***

The gender issues that need to be introduced into the Global Employment Agenda in order to strengthen the links between gender, employment and the overall development strategy can be discussed under five headings. The first three deal with issues of gender and development policy: gender and development strategies; gender and overall labour supply- particularly migration and fertility; gender, access to resources and capacities for development. The final two deal with issues of gender in systems of representation and in civic society and social capital.

#### ***2.3.1 Gender and development policy***

##### ***i) Gender and development strategies (core elements 1, 7, 10)***

An important issue for development strategy is whether it is appropriate to develop comparative advantage on the basis of gender inequality and discrimination. Women have played a major part in the development of manufacturing trade for developing countries but there remains a major question as to whether or not the low pay that women receive in manufacturing is a necessary factor in the attraction of foreign direct investment, such that globalisation and international trade in part depends upon the undervaluation of women's labour (Seguino 2000). This undervaluation may allow the foreign direct investors to return a smaller proportion of the total value added to the country in which the product is manufactured or, following Seguino's argument, permit the development of a virtuous circle whereby the enhanced returns from trade provide for increased investment, thereby generating further growth. Issues of women's undervaluation in employment and work are therefore not solely domestic issues but are also linked into issues of fair exchange and fair trading arrangements at a global level. The question is whether there is scope for further improvements in women's earnings within the manufacturing sector without jeopardising investment and development. Ghoshe (2004) (see GB.291/ESP/2), suggests that foreign direct investment is not attracted by low labour standards and thus, by implication, closing the gender pay gap would not have a major impact on engagement in trade or attraction of foreign direct investment. Strategies to improve the value attached to

female activities within global production chains is an urgent requirement if developing countries are to benefit significantly from their engagement in international trade and investment. Trends towards the use of local subcontractors within global production chains may be leading to further deterioration in the conditions of work associated with female labour. In practical terms this means at a minimum the promotion of codes of practice or minimum labour standards for export-orientated sectors, export processing zones and foreign direct investment. Gender issues need to be incorporated into the debate on new international trading agreements and international subcontracting arrangements and codes of practice on employment rights and employment protection

There is a need also to develop a critical gender perspective to proposed development strategies: for example the impact of promoting low wages in the interests of job creation on the gender pay gap needs to be identified (CE 7). In a context where there is recognition of gender discrimination with respect to pay and other aspects of job quality those asserting the need to lower wage levels are in effect suggesting that women should bear the burden of more work for low pay in order to support their families and the wider society. There tends to be no discussion of at which point women should become eligible to receive an appropriate reward for their labour; the treatment of women's claims on the society's resources as always a residual, to be met only when the economy can afford it, should be an approach resisted within the decent work agenda. As a consequence there is a need for more debate and discussion of the appropriate minimum wage levels to be fixed with reference not simply to a gender neutral discussion of potential trade-offs between quantity and quality of work but also with reference to the tendency for women's labour to be undervalued, such that, for example, minimum wage policy is a means of countering discrimination in the labour market.

The GEA approach has been to focus not on lowering standards but on increasing the employment-intensity of growth; however the existing high level of employment-intensity in many female-dominated sectors calls into question the notion that the Global Employment Agenda can be achieved through employment-intensive growth. In female sectors it may be more important to focus on means of raising productivity and at the same time ensuring that women are not displaced by men once jobs move towards higher productivity levels.

*ii) Migration, fertility and women's position in the labour market and household.* Attention needs to be paid to the role of women in trends in population growth, migration and fertility. A global employment agenda without a perspective on population, migration flows and fertility does not as Godfrey (2005) points out make sense, as it is these demographic trends in conjunction with employment trends and social organisation that will determine whether or not economies continue to be in labour surplus. In the developed world, the problems of low fertility are closely linked to the problems of an ageing society and again the gender perspective needs to be brought into play in understanding the interplay between the employment agenda, the social protection agenda and the demographic trends. Esping-Andersson (2002) has shown a clear positive link between higher fertility and women's employment opportunities, countering the view that childbearing is an alternative to female labour force participation in developed economies. A clear way of protecting and promoting the welfare state in the developed world, and thereby countering poverty, is to

promote either fertility or migration in order to reduce the problems of an ever smaller working age population supporting an expanding older population. Developing economies may have different and indeed more complex relations between women's employment opportunities, fertility trends and population growth, with infant mortality trends another important intervening variable. The need for the global employment agenda aimed at poverty reduction to stress the interlinkages between women's employment opportunities, fertility and infant mortality is, however, clear-cut.

*iii) Gender, access to resources and capacities for development (core elements 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 10)*

The promotion of decent work requires complementary access to resources. The global employment agenda in calling for the ending of discrimination in the labour market makes specific mention of the violation of human rights that occurs through the deprivation of education to girls (CE 6). Concern must be attached not only to the share of women in education but by subject area: the core element on technology requires a focus on women having access to science and engineering courses (CE 2).

The promotion of decent work within the informal economy and amongst the self-employed and small and medium-size enterprises is also particularly dependent on improvements in access to finance and credit and in some cases to land and property (CE 5). It should be noted, however, that the formalisation of land rights in processes of land reform may lead to the exclusion of women's access, where this is based on customary rights, for example in sub-Saharan Africa (UNRISD 2005: 103). Women's access to credit is often more limited than even that of men operating in the informal sector. Forms of governance such as cooperatives are identified as clearly providing opportunities for those without usual sources of access to credit or resources to be able to develop reasonable livelihoods and experience decent work and these benefits are identified as particularly strong for women.

Access to resources changes over time and when new markets become open to international trading it is important to ensure that women have access to these markets and are not excluded simply on the basis of operating as small traders; consideration of cooperative arrangements and the like to facilitate women's engagement in international economy is important (CE 1). Women indeed should not be seen as unable to deal with or engage with big business and there needs to be capacity building to support women to have access to multinationals and large organisations (UNCTAD 1999:6).

Concern over women's access to resources requires the rejection of policies that focus on the household as a unit without reference to the rights of individuals. These rights apply also to social protection at times of important life risks. The life risks identified in the Global Employment Agenda as 'sickness, invalidity, old age or maternity in parenthood as well as the loss of income due to a variety of causes' are either likely to affect women equally as men or in some cases more so, as in the context of maternity in parenthood. Gender equality in capabilities is unlikely without gender equality in social protection (CE 8).

### ***2.3.2 Gender and representation***

*i) Bridging the representation gap( core elements 1, 3, 4,5, 10)*

The ILO is a tripartite organisation and in all its strategic developments the need for opportunities for effective representation is stressed. This approach is followed in the Global Employment Agenda where social dialogue is described as an overarching value. There is considerable stress at various points on the need for social partners and civic society to take ownership of the employment strategies. There is also discussion at various points of the need to extend representation or indeed to bridge the representation gap by including opportunities for representatives of small and micro-based enterprises to be included in processes of representation and debate. The specific need to ensure greater opportunities for representation for women -- specifically the need to bridge the representation gender gap -- has not yet been directly incorporated into the global employment agenda. The global employment agenda recognises that 'poverty is not merely income deprivation, but vulnerability arising from the absence of social protection, discrimination in labour markets, and the absence of empowerment.' Women are more vulnerable on each of these four dimensions. The empowerment of poor women requires attention to be paid to their representation gap in the development of pro poor policies or PRSPs.

Attention also needs to be paid to the impact of decentralisation on women's empowerment to ensure that this does not in factor strengthen patriarchal or traditional values that constrain or oppress women. The decent work agenda rejects the exclusion of women on political and religious grounds but there needs to be links made between the calls for representation and the potential impact on women's rights of access to employment.

*ii) Gendering social capital and promoting good governance*

The importance of country ownership of development strategies, including structural adjustment and macro economic policies is an increasing theme in the UN development agenda and is also found quite strongly in the Global Employment Agenda. There is now a recognition of the need for societal commitment to the policy approach and there are calls for the involvement of unions and business people in its formulation. The problem of the lack of representation of women within civic society and political society, where such ownership should be debated and societal commitments made, is not discussed. Without closing the representation gap for women, the legitimacy of social dialogue in debating trade-offs may be compromised and the democratic deficit will continue.

Malik and Waglé (2002) recognise the issue of underrepresentation and identify a role for the state to 'step in to influence social norms in instances of exclusionary practices linked with race, gender and ethnicity' (op.cit. 89). However, such intervention is neither straightforward, nor indeed that likely in a context in which men's concerns and interests dominate those of the state. Women's role in the private sphere may be a barrier to their greater involvement in civic society and the public sphere and active and specific measures need to be taken to remedy these problems. It must also be remembered that measures designed to return power to a more local level may have mixed impacts on women, particularly where this involves increased power for traditional sources of authority associated with religion and customary values which reinforce women's lack of empowerment (UNRISD 2005: 14)). Furthermore, a

precondition for gender equality to be embedded in social capital and civic society may indeed be a reduction in, and preferably the elimination of, discrimination in access to the labour market and to wage income. Thus, in debating the involvement of developing economies and societies in their own strategic development, the continued differentiation in access to social and civic resources within the society must be borne in mind, with strategies devised to reduce differences not only by gender but also by ethnic minority, region and other salient dimensions of disadvantage.

### **3. Concluding remarks**

There is an urgent need to introduce a clear and developed gender perspective into the Global Employment Agenda. The current documents on the Global Employment Agenda do not do justice to the commitments of the ILO and the UN in general to gender mainstreaming and gender equality. The need for such a perspective is not solely because of the imperative social justice arguments. Without a gender perspective the Global Employment Agenda cannot aspire to making effective and influential contributions to debates on the current transformations taking place in the global economy. Whether debating trends in decent work, in movements towards the millennium poverty eradication targets or in building capacities for development, the gender perspective is central. Without taking gender into account it is not possible to attempt to analyse the factors behind, or the impact of, informalisation or the emergence of international production chains. Similarly it is not only women's greater risk of falling into poverty that needs to be taken into account but also their crucial role in the household in determining the standard of living and the quality of life of children and the household as a whole. Promoting local capacities for development also needs a gender perspective not only to ensure the interests of women are represented but also so that their vital economic activities, both paid and unpaid, are neither ignored nor misunderstood in policy formation.

Beyond the gender mainstreaming approach, at a policy level there is undoubtedly also a need for gender specific policy development – that is for a twin track approach to gender equality. Gender mainstreaming of current policy development serves to anticipate, counter and possibly eliminate negative effects of policy design and can even be used to develop policy programmes that promote rather than hinder gender equality. At the same time there is a need for further development and continuation of specific gender equality policies to assist in the reversal of disadvantage. As the UNRISD (2005) report makes clear, gender equality will not simply result from trickle-down effects associated with overall growth and employment development. There is thus a need for specific and explicit gender equality policies to complement appropriate growth and employment generation policies. These specific policies need to operate alongside more general macroeconomic, trade, employment and poverty programmes that have been designed with gender equality considerations in mind. Issues of gender segregation or sexual and reproductive health rights or protection against violence in the private and public spheres require specific policy action.

Besides adopting a twin-track approach to gender equality including gender mainstreaming and specific gender equality policies, action also needs to be taken to improve women's role in the formation of development and employment policies- to

reduce gender bias in social capital and in civic society. The improved representation of women within civic society will not necessarily come about simply because of a recognition of the need for gender mainstreaming by international organisations. For example, the move towards poverty reduction strategic plans has not led automatically to the representation of women's interests in public policy, despite the increasing feminisation of poverty itself and the growing debate on this dimension of the development problem. Specific policies need to be developed to promote the presence of women's groups and organisations in the formulation of employment policy agendas at the international, regional, national and local level.

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## **Appendix. Gender mainstreaming and the global employment agenda: the 10 core elements**

### **Core element 1: promoting trade, foreign investment and productive employment in developing countries**

#### **1.1 Applying the gender mainstreaming framework**

##### *i) Gender differences in employment and work*

- Women's employment is disproportionately represented in the development of manufacturing trade particularly in export processing zones and in textiles and clothing but also in offshoring of services and the growth of pink collar work
- One issue that arises is the extent to which women's involvement in this globalised trading relationships is dependent upon the undervaluation of women's work; even if that is the case the long-term impacts on women are unclear as Seguino (2000) has argued that this export growth has facilitated further growth within the exporting country by facilitating infrastructure developments and the like in an endogenous growth cycle (for every 0.10 percent increase in the gender wage gap, a 0.15 percent increase in GDP growth was identified).
- Another problem is to determine whether or not the employment opportunities offered to women through the development of export trade and foreign direct investment has led to improvements or deterioration in their employment position. Indeed one factor that may lead to women being seen as an appropriate labour source by foreign direct investment is the presumed ease of disposability of female labour. Braunstein (2005) has surveyed the empirical literature and has argued that to some extent the debate depends upon the starting point or the frame of reference deployed: whether the comparison is to local alternatives or to what she calls human development standards, that is conditions of work that in some absolute sense can be considered decent. Lim's statement that women employed in the export sector are "unambiguously better off" is argued not to be fully supported by the empirical evidence. In particular some of the gains that women appear to make initially have been eroded over time; this applies to their share of employment as women's share declined in the decade 1980 to 90 in Malaysia, South Korea and Philippines according to Joekes (1999). Indeed in the maquiladora Fussell (2000) found that women share declined from 77% in 1980 to only 41% in 1999, although over the same time period there was an overall increase in employment from 100,000 to 750,000. Similar arguments apply to wages with earnings in the maquiladora for example initially being higher than those in the local economy but over time converging to local levels although still providing more stable earnings. The problems of comparison are raised again by Braunstein in the context of Kabeer's study of women in export processing zones in Bangladesh where the issue according to Kabeer (2004) was not simply that of determining local alternatives but also taking account of the economic independence that such employment conferred on women, thereby providing them with considerable improvements in their status in the family and society.
- While the development of international trade is drawing more women into international production systems the same processes of globalisation are

having some negative effects on women's role in the local economy and local food production

- The engagement of developing countries in international production chains and globalisation of markets appears to have resulted in widening internal wage inequality which in turn is likely to work to the detriment of women; Nevertheless within those aggregate categories there are variations in effects by gender. These gender effects are not fully spelled out in the policy paper (GB.291/ESP/2) and instead the aggregate low skilled /higher skilled categories are used but there may be quite major differences within these categories by gender. Moreover, it is argued that even if wage inequality has risen there may be some benefits in terms of absolute level of real wages. However, this analysis needs to be disaggregated by gender, for although the outcome of globalisation for men and women combined is regarded as having mixed effects, it is necessary to know where the balance lies for men and women separately.

*ii) Gender differences in the relationships between work and employment and poverty*

- The impact of the development of international trade has been to increase the share of women in the monetised economy but that involvement remains precarious and insecure and the share of women in the service economy based around foreign direct investment has apparently remained relatively low until the recent growth of offshoring associated with IT and telecommunications
- Although women have been strongly represented in those segments integrated into the international economy, the majority of women remain part of the rural poor and account for the majority of the rural poor. Here there may be negative effects of internationalisation or globalisation, with cheap food imports threatening local production. Where women are drawn into the cash crop agricultural sector, there are dangers that they are not rewarded appropriately for their labours, with negative effects on their ability to provide for themselves and the household. Moreover there may be trade-offs between women's involvement in the export manufacturing sector and social and family development. The individual benefits that women derive from such involvement, particularly measured by economic autonomy (Kabeer 2004) may coexist with negative impacts on, for example, care provision for children. Equally, however, there may be positive spin-offs with children benefiting from the enhanced economic independence of their mothers.
- Structural adjustment to the changing patterns of trade and agreements on trade affect women as much as men if not more so, and the new arrangements in the textile and clothing industries can be expected to have significant structural effects on women's employment opportunities; consideration of structural adjustment by gender requires one to take into account not only the impact on wage incomes but also on household resource allocations of the distribution of unpaid labour.

*iii) Gender differences in capabilities for employment and development*

- A major issue for developing countries is the extent to which women's current low wages and their undervaluation, both in relation to male labour within the domestic economy and in relation to the international economy, is a key factor in the attraction and retention of foreign direct investment, or whether there is scope for further improvements in women's earnings within the manufacturing sector without jeopardising investment and development

- When new markets become open to international trading it is important to ensure that women have access to these markets and are not excluded simply on the basis of operating as small traders; consideration of cooperative arrangements and the like to facilitate women's engagement in international economy is important. Women indeed should not be seen as unable to deal with or engage with big business and their needs to be capacity building to support women to have access to multinationals and large organisations (UNCTAD 1999:6).
- Gender issues need to be incorporated into the debate on new international trading agreements and international subcontracting arrangements and codes of practice on employment rights and employment protection

## 1.2 Integrating gender into the decent work agenda: trade, foreign investment and productive employment

The ILO the decent work agenda in the context of promoting trade, foreign investment and productive employment requires first that consideration is given to the role of gender discrimination in trade flows and foreign investment. If the export orientated sectors are primarily dependent on female labour and this labour is undervalued due to discrimination, policies to improve the valuation attached to female labour may therefore be considered likely not only to have gender equality effects but also an impact on the returns from trade and foreign investment in the domestic economy. Such returns would not be evident if comparative advantage in attracting foreign direct investment or in engaging in international trade is dependent upon the undervaluation of female labour and Seguino's (2000) argument that the gender pay gap is a source of increased growth provides an additional complication to this analysis. However, other research, for example by Ghoshe (2004) (see GB.291/ESP/2), suggests that foreign direct investment is not attracted by low labour standards and thus, by implication, closing the gender pay gap would not have a major impact on engagement in trade or attraction of foreign direct investment.

The second and related issue for the decent work agenda is the promotion of codes of practice or minimum labour standards for export-orientated sectors, export processing zones and foreign direct investment. Strategies to improve the value attached to female activities within global production chains is an urgent requirement if developing countries are to benefit significantly from their engagement in international trade and investment. Trends towards the use of local subcontractors within global production chains may be leading to further deterioration in the conditions of work associated with female labour.

The third issue is to analyse the impact of international trade development and foreign direct investment on the informal economy and indeed the unpaid economy; consideration of the impact only on the formal economy may be to minimise the attention paid to female-specific effects of changes in the organisation of production associated with the opening up of the economy to trade and investment. Part of the evaluation of the effects of foreign direct investment and export-orientated trade on women's employment must include consideration of the effect of volatility in foreign direct investment and in women's employment opportunities. Globalisation not only involves the outsourcing of production from developed to developing countries but

may also lead to further switching of production when new markets and opportunities for further reductions in costs open up.

Finally, in promoting the representation of developing countries at the international level and in the negotiation of new trade agreements, the ILO needs to address the representation gap for women and to ensure that NGOs and national and international representation on behalf of developing countries represents the interests of women as well as men.

## **Core element 2: promoting technological change for higher productivity and job creation and improved standards of living**

### **2.1 Applying the gender mainstreaming framework**

#### *i) Gender differences in employment and work*

- Gender differences in access to and utilisation of technology are clearly both associated with gender segregation and in part a cause of gender segregation
- New technology is a facilitator of both the development of off shoring and new service work and the emergence of global production chains in manufacturing; women are strongly represented in both developments
- The promotion of labour-intensive technology and production systems is a major element of the global employment agenda but for the most part this is analysed with respect to construction and infrastructure development, areas where women are likely to be underrepresented. The potential for such an approach in female-dominated sectors needs to be considered, but it is nevertheless likely that many of these sectors will be found to be already strongly labour-intensive, thereby limiting the employment effects from any further promotion of labour-intensive technology. A further issue is to prevent the substitution of male for female labour where technology becomes less labour-intensive and more capital intensive, a phenomenon associated for example with the maquiladora (Fussell 200?).
- The paper on technology (GB 292/ESP/3) treats the notion of skill and its links with technology as relatively unproblematic. The concept of the social construction of skill and skill categories is thereby not addressed. This social construction of skill is important for understanding both the role of technological change and gender segregation and gender pay differences. Application of new technologies may not raise the required skill level in the sense of the time taken to learn the task but may lead to increase in productivity, independent of skill in the conventional sense of learning time. This higher productivity or higher value-added per employee is often regarded as constituting an increase in skill when the more appropriate term may be increased responsibility (Bettio 1988, Craig et al. 1985). Research suggests that women's skills compare more favourably to men's when compared using indicators of conventional skills but less favourably when issues of responsibility for value added or resources are used. This more complex approach to the linkages between skill, technological change and gender relations suggest that the displacement of women from higher value-added jobs may be due more to power relations and the approbation of higher value added jobs by men than to issues of skills or competences.
- In the debate on the effects of either trade or skill-biased technological change on the pattern of wage inequality as found in (GB 292/ESP/3), it is vital to disaggregate the analysis by gender and to question the extent to which all

‘low skilled’ labour is being displaced in advanced countries , or whether the displacement primarily applies to particular sectors such as manufacturing where men in fact predominate. Changing gender composition of the labour force need to be considered, not just aggregate categories of high or low skilled labour to make sense of the relative impacts of skill trends versus changes in gender discrimination.

*ii) Gender differences in the relationships between work and employment and poverty*

- The impact of new technology and production systems on the gender division of labour outside and inside the household needs to be considered. In many cases it is not the technology itself but its association with forms of ownership and systems of production that may lead to gender effects that may have implications for women's role as providers and carers as well as workers.

*iii) Gender differences in capabilities for employment and development*

- In order that women should not be disadvantaged by the introduction and application new technology, it is vital that gender equality in education and training is promoted. Concern must be attached the share of women on science and engineering courses.
- Technology is identified in (GB 292/ESP/3) as a force for social change but its impact depends critically on the social and institutional context in which it is implemented. There is therefore a need to have specific social policies to promote gender equality in the context of the implementation of new technologies.
- The focus in the report (GB 292/ESP/3) is on the need for technical skills and it is in this respect that there is seen to be a potential female deficit. However, in many areas technical skills need to be combined with organisational and social skills for real effectiveness; there is no necessary presumption that women are deficient in these skills and may even have a comparative advantage. The important issue is therefore to try to ensure that women are not excluded from job areas simply because of a lack of technical skills, when these may constitute only a small part of the job. Steps need to be taken to ensure women do have the opportunity to acquire these skills and the fact that men may perform better in this part of the job should not be seen as indicative of overall job performance.

**2.2 Integrating gender into the decent work agenda: promoting technological change**

New technology should be regarded as a complementary resource for the development of decent work. As such, gender equality in access to new technology is important for the reduction in gender discrimination in employment. Gender equality in education and training may be a necessary prerequisite for gender inequality in access to new technology but even this may not be a sufficient condition. Social dialogue is identified as important in shaping the impact of technology but the gender gap in representation within the social dialogue is not referred to or actions to remedy the gap proposed. Attention needs to be paid to how the application of new technology may be both empowering and exploitative. The role of new technology in controlling and monitoring work processes, particularly in female dominated workplaces needs to be investigated. Jobs that combine organisational, social and technical skills need to be promoted to create more quality employment opportunities for women.

**Core element 3: promoting sustainable development for sustainable livelihoods (not yet developed as a detailed policy agenda)**



### 3.1 Applying the gender mainstreaming framework

#### *i) Gender differences in employment and work*

- The concept of sustainable livelihoods has both an environmental and a stability dimension. The particular issue for women is the insecurity and vulnerability of their employment and sustainable livelihoods as an objective requires the development of more stable and secure access to employment and income.
- The existence of gender differences in involvement in unsustainable employment due to environmental effects is an empirical issue that requires further investigation.

#### *ii) Gender differences in the relationships between work and employment and poverty*

- Sustainable livelihoods requires consideration of the linkages between wage employment, family and household organisation and provisioning and sustainable standards of living and livelihoods. In this consideration of the interlinkages between the wage employment system and the outcomes with respect to standards of living and livelihoods, the gender issue is of critical importance.
- Environmental problems may be experienced particularly in the private and family economy. The quality of life is not measured solely by GDP growth and wage income and the role of women in providing and sustaining the quality of life for the household needs to be explored.

#### *iii) Gender differences in capabilities for employment and development*

- Issues such as access to land, credit and local control of agricultural development may be critical in the promotion of a sustainable development agenda. Inequalities between men and women in access to land and credit and inequalities in their ability to exercise local control may impact upon the possibilities of local sustainable development.

### 3.2 Integrating gender into the decent work agenda: promoting sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods

The ILO decent work agenda requires the integration of an environmental dimension. This environmental dimension must in turn necessarily take into account the issues of local versus international production and international trade. In debating the needs for the protection and maintenance of local production capabilities, the role of women in local production must not be overlooked.

## **Core element 4 Macro economic policy for growth and employment: a call for policy integration**

### 4.1 Applying the gender mainstreaming framework

#### *i) Gender differences in employment and work*

- Because of women's different position in the labour market, any changes in the level and/or composition of demand is likely to have gender effects (UNRISD 2005). Moreover because women face even greater problems of lack of work, insecurity of work and insecurity in rights, they may face an even greater likelihood of being affected by structural adjustment (GB.291/ESP/1 paragraph 17). The stabilisation policies may come at the expense of further investment in infrastructure and a key question is which groups -- and here we

are mainly concerned with differences between men and women -- suffer from cutbacks in infrastructure.

- Similarly policies to change the proportion of public and private sector involvement in the provision of public services may have gender effects but these may vary by country; for example women may dominate public sector employment in developed economies but men may have more involvement in the public sector in developing economies
- Macroeconomic policy designed in relation to problems of unemployment has different effects by gender because women are less often openly unemployed and less often in receipt of benefits on grounds of unemployment. It is argued that social protection in the least developed countries primarily comprises investment and employment generation policies but there are still questions as to who mainly benefits from such policy agendas.
- New approaches to macroeconomic policy advocate a blending of macro and micro approaches but within that broader framework there is a need to integrate a gender perspective into the micro structures that are being discussed.

*ii) Gender differences in the relationships between work and employment and poverty*

- Policies to promote pro poor growth are likely to benefit women but needed nevertheless to be analysed from a gender perspective. Where pro poor is associated, for example, with the openly unemployed, women may be underrepresented
- The gender impact of structural adjustment, particularly where this results in spending cuts, has been and needs to be a central part of all policy analysis (Elson 1995). It is at the family and household level that deficiencies in public expenditure have to be compensated for and it is women who are at the centre of the struggle to maintain standards of living in the context of structural adjustment.
- The role of the unpaid and the informal economy in promoting well-being and welfare needs to be taken into account in all attempts to measure growth rates and the effectiveness of pro poor growth policies; unless these hidden sectors of the economy are made more visible, the impact of changes in the structure of the economy and in patterns of demand on the welfare of women and their dependants cannot be fully derived from changes in macroeconomic variables as normally classified

*iii) Gender differences in capabilities for employment and development*

- The importance of country ownership of structural adjustment and macro economic policies is stressed, together with the need for societal commitment to the policy approach and the involvement of unions and business people in its formulation. The problem of the lack of representation of women within civic society and political society, where such ownership may be debated and societal commitments may be made, is not discussed. Without closing the representation gap for women, the legitimacy of social dialogue in debating trade-offs may be compromised and the democratic deficit will continue.
- Macroeconomic policy should be used in part to mitigate volatility associated with the business cycle but the policy tools need to be investigated to identify whether mitigation applies equally to male and female incomes.

## 4.2 Integrating gender into the decent work agenda: Macro economic policy for growth and employment

A vital element of the ILO employment approach is to call for counter cyclical macroeconomic policies which promote stability in employment. Such an approach is likely to benefit women as well as men but is an empirical question which sectors are most affected by the adoption of pro or counter cyclical macroeconomic policies. Evidence from Vietnam suggests that macroeconomic policy reform that promotes stable and higher levels of growth is beneficial for women but is not sufficient either to reduce or to prevent a widening of gender inequalities (Packard 2005).

The ILO decent work approach takes it as axiomatic that labour standards should be adopted in their own right and not be treated simply as an element of macroeconomic policy. In many countries minimum wage policy and social protection policy may become subordinate to macroeconomic issues but the decent work approach suggests that these labour standards or protections should be implemented and pursued independently of macro economic conditions. In particular the level of minimum wages should not be used as a means of reducing public expenditure on social protection policies, where social protection rights are links to the level of minimum wages (Rubery 2003).

An emerging strand in development economics is the focus on country ownership of all policies, particularly macroeconomic policies. This approach is in contrast to the notion of IMF- or World Bank-imposed structural adjustment policies. However, for country ownership not to result in the exclusion of women from policy agendas, it is necessary for steps to be taken to bridge the representation gap of women in the public policy arena.

### **Core element 5: Promoting decent employment through entrepreneurship**

#### 5.1 Applying the gender mainstreaming framework

##### *i) Gender differences in employment and work*

- Female employees are disproportionately found in SMEs but women are underrepresented as entrepreneurs in SMEs except for small microbased businesses
- Job quality is considered a general issue of concern within SMEs but this concern may be particularly strong for women, both because job quality is already lower on average for women and within SMEs the gender differences in job quality may be larger. Moreover as Ghosh (2004) suggests, the utilisation of the informal sector by employers may be in part regarded as a strategy to avoid minimum labour standards.
- To stimulate entrepreneurship, SMEs and/or microbased enterprises may be excluded from regulations including those pertaining to job quality but thresholds may create barriers to expansion and indeed exclude many women from coverage; the streamlining of regulations and simplification may be preferable.

##### *ii) Gender differences in the relationships between work and employment and poverty*

- Women may be involved in unpaid or low paid roles within family enterprises, playing important roles in maintaining family livelihoods but enjoying relatively little economic autonomy.

- Women's entrepreneurial activities may often be combined with their household, caring and food provisioning responsibilities or roles

### *iii) Gender differences in capabilities for employment and development*

#### Barriers to/ causes of lack of capacity

- Women tend to operate subsistence enterprises and therefore are subject to extreme vulnerability (GB.289/ESP/1 paragraph 61); this extreme vulnerability is linked to women's limited opportunities in the monetised economy
- A major cause of lack of capacity for women to engage in entrepreneurship is lack of access to finance and credit which in turn is related to inadequate property rights for women
- Successful entrepreneurship may require the development of a dense web of institutions and networks; women may be engaged in locally-based informal networks but may be excluded from more formal sector networks

#### Representation gaps

- The representation gap is recognised with respect to entrepreneurs in small micro-based companies in the policy paper GB.289/ESP/1 but this representation gap needs to be explicitly linked to a gender representation gap
- Trade unions are identified as key players in the policy paper GB.289/ESP/1 in shaping entrepreneurship but there is a need for discussion of gender gaps in representation within trade unions

#### Gendering capacity building

- To overcome women's disadvantage it may be particularly important that they are involved in cooperative entrepreneurial networks to overcome problems of exclusion from credit and from other more formal networks or resources; such cooperative forms may be necessary to upgrade the quality of women's businesses located more in the informal sector
- Building capacity and support services is identified in the policy paper GB.289/ESP/1 as key to further development of entrepreneurship but this capacity building and support service development needs to support women in entrepreneurship not just men
- In the promotion of pro poor partnerships which require that SMEs respect minimum standards such as the payment of minimum wages before being engaged, for example, to provide public services, policymakers need to investigate whether or not the selected SMEs in practice have a greater tendency to employ men or women.
- The need for gender role models is identified in the policy paper GB.289/ESP/1 but fails to provide further elaboration of the purposes of the development of gender role models – for example, for raising aspirations, promoting networking among women and between women and men etc
- Gender issues could be introduced into discussion for example of sustainable tourism where there may be scope for linking new areas in the monetised economy to women's traditional roles in the household
- Entrepreneurship is linked to policies and strategies to assist laid off women in the example of Ethiopia. Reference could also be made to China where this is a particularly major issue; many more women were laid off from the state-owned enterprises than men
- There is a recognition of the need for programmes for women with disabilities but there is a danger of linking together gender inequalities with other forms

of disadvantage, related to specific minority groups, as this may encourage policymakers to regard women as a minority group.

## 5.2 Integrating gender into the decent work agenda: Promoting decent employment through entrepreneurship

Notions of compliance with minimum labour standards as part of the ILO decent work agenda is particularly important in the context of the discussion of entrepreneurship and decent work. Discussions of entrepreneurship and SMEs often focus on the problems of compliance with minimum labour standards but the ILO approach is to promote simplified labour standards rather than exclusions or thresholds. This policy approach is likely to benefit women who are more likely to be found in very small enterprises or working on their own account in highly vulnerable and insecure conditions. The extension of protections from employees to include all workers who are dependent on the main employer can be of particular significance for women. The use of contract compliance in the promotion of local subcontractors for the public sector could act to the benefit of women but it is empirical question whether or not these policies, when implemented, apply to female dominated as well as male dominated local companies.

The importance of the cooperative movement for the empowerment of women is well recognised in the global employment agenda. The importance of institutional forms to facilitate the full participation of women in economic life needs to be further stressed. This includes further promotion of equality in access to resources including property, land, credit as well as education and training. Access to resources is particularly important in promoting entrepreneurship and in increasing the productivity and security of informal work.

There is recognition of the need to bridge the representation gap with respect to those engaged in the informal economy and micro businesses but there is currently no specific analysis of the need to bridge that gap by gender. Only by taking a gender perspective will the representation gap be fully addressed.

## **Core element 6; employability by improving knowledge and skills (not yet developed as a detailed policy agenda)**

### 6.1 Applying the gender mainstreaming framework

#### *i) Gender differences in employment and work*

- Women are both underrepresented among skilled workers and under recognised as skilled workers. There is therefore a need to both promote women's access to knowledge and skills and to provide more effective means of recognising women's existing knowledge and skills.
- Discrimination in access to employment adds to problems that women face in gaining equality in access to education. The development of the skilled workforce involves both education and experience of challenging work.

#### *ii) Gender differences in the relationships between work and employment and poverty*

- Women's position in the family and household may restrict their access to education and training. The prioritising of domestic work for girls and young women or their engagement in child labour may restrict the development of human resources and perpetuates low education literacy among the if the subsequent generations. These effects are in addition to the discrimination suffered by the women themselves.

*iii) Gender differences in capabilities for employment and development*

- Women's capabilities to benefit from development efforts are clearly related to their access to education and training.

## 6.2 Integrating gender into the decent work agenda: employability by improving knowledge and skills

The promotion of decent work involves upgrading the quality of labour supply and the quality of the work environment, including the development of more challenging and empowering forms of work and the provision of access to training. These challenges apply particularly to many areas of women's work which have been constituted as low productivity and highly controlled forms of work. However, there are other areas of women's work which rely on traditional women's skills often acquired in the domestic arena and where the complexity of the work and the skills involved remain under-recognised.

## **Core element 7: Active labour market policies for employment, security in change, equity and poverty reduction**

### 7.1 Applying the gender mainstreaming framework

*i) Gender differences in employment and work*

- There are differences by gender in representation in the categories of unemployment and underemployment. The contingent nature of women's relationship to the labour market may mean that problems of unemployment and underemployment are less evident as women may substitute unpaid work for paid work
- In developing countries active labour market policies may be aimed at the underemployed and those in the informal sector as much as at the openly unemployed and as a consequence there may be less underrepresentation in principle of women among the target groups in developing countries than in developed; however again it is an empirical question whether or not the active labour market policies aimed at the informal sector focus on female occupations and trades or on male-dominated ones.
- Active labour market policies are expected to: i) improve job matching in the labour market -but this is constrained for women by restrictions on travel and care work; ii) to increase skills -but the impact depends on whether women are included in training programmes; iii) to decrease labour supply through retirement - but this option often only applies to men as women may not be eligible or not in employment in older age ranges; iv) to improve employability of target groups which may or may not include women, depending on whether they are identified as a group to be assisted (GB.288/ESP/2)
- The impact on other target groups such as the young or the old needs to be disaggregated by gender as the problems facing young women may be quite

different from young men and similarly the problems facing female older workers quite different from those facing male older workers

- Women, like men, are affected by restructuring and change but an empirical question is the extent to which structural changes involving women are more or less likely to be met by active labour market policy interventions; there is clear evidence in developed countries that, for example, the restructuring of shipbuilding or steel has led to stronger active labour market interventions than the restructuring of textiles (Rubery et al. 1999). A particular issue is therefore the support provided to those affected by changes in the quotas in international trade for textiles and garments.

*ii) Gender differences in the relationships between work and employment and poverty*

- As women are often less eligible for passive income replacement support in both developed and developing countries, a focus on active labour market policies could benefit women proportionately more than men as it is primarily through active participation in paid work that women receive monetary resources; where income protection is provided to replace income from paid work, for example through social security, women may be less likely to be in receipt of such income as it may be paid on a household basis to the main breadwinner or may depend upon a record of continuous or full-time employment in the formal economy. .
- The impact of active labour market policies on sustained employability should not be considered simply from the labour market perspective but also from the availability of support for household responsibilities and care, particularly in the case of lone parents; active labour market policies that try to integrate lone parents into work may fail because of factors that may lead to high quit rates after job entry (Evans et al. 2004)
- The development of in work benefits in several European countries and the United States raises issues of whether such benefits should be based on the household or an individual basis; as the OECD (2003) has argued, household based in work benefits will tend to discourage participation by the second income earner, thereby reducing women's involvement in the labour market in couple households, even if the same policies have positive effects for female lone parents
 

‘Basing the benefit on overall household income may reduce the incentive for the spouse to work and such a risk may be crucial in those countries where non-employment is concentrated among spouses. However, this perverse effect may be attenuated when eligibility requirements are individually based.’ (OECD 2003:118).
- Strong active labour market policies may be introduced to assist in the context of redundancy where the majority of the workforce being made redundant is identified as main breadwinners; there is less evidence of such interventions in jobs lost that are part-time, casual or taken indeed by women
- The recognition that active labour market policies need to be differentiated to meet the needs of different groups of workers -- the argument that not one size fits all -- has the potential to stimulate the development of a broader approach to active labour market policies to include the necessary household and social

- support to facilitate integration into employment for those for example who are single parents or those with responsibilities for care for the elderly
- The possibility of providing employment guarantees has been mooted in India. Such a system is likely to have gender specific effects as only the most vulnerable and disadvantaged are covered under the rural employment guarantee, a high proportion of whom are likely to be women - provided there is access to such schemes on individual and not simply a household basis (Godfrey 2005). Moreover, such schemes may have implications for the extent of unpaid work within the household or other forms of informal work with direct consequences for household standards of living. These changes in the domestic division of labour, consequent upon changes in access to the monetised economy, need to be analysed from a gender perspective.

*iii) Gender differences in capabilities for employment and development#*

- Active labour market policies may focus on direct employment effects such as through job creation or indirectly through training and improving employability; an empirical question again is whether or not women are more or less represented in the direct or indirect measures and what the impact of these measures is on future employability
- In general there is a need for analysis of the outcomes of active labour market policies by gender, particularly with respect to the longer term effects of active labour market policies on employability
- Women are mentioned as a potential target group for active labour market policies but in practice many women who are inactive are ineligible for such policies
- Active labour market policies are said to be a form of social protection as a productive factor but the extent to which the social protection is gender neutral or gendered is not identified or addressed in policy paper GB.288/ESP/2
- The move to active labour market policies is associated with critiques of both tax and wage structures that appear to discourage the employment of low skilled workers, but the problem with such approaches is that, first of all, policies to reduce low wages to stimulate job creation may have negative effects on the gender pay gap and secondly policies to reduce payroll taxes may also have indirect negative effects on gender equality, if for example a reduced tax take leads to a reduction in public services or low paid jobs are excluded from social protection systems, as in practice women are likely to predominate among the excluded groups.
- Social dialogue is identified as a key issue in the development and management of active labour market policies in policy paper GB.288/ESP/2 but the need to close representation gaps for the unemployed, the underemployed and indeed by gender is not identified
- The use of unemployment as an indicator of job shortage has been demonstrated to have negative gender effects as more women who are unable to access the labour market are more likely to be counted as inactive; the focus on the employment rate for the working age population provides a better measure of the potential size of the population that may be interested in institutional arrangements that facilitate mediation between labour supply and labour demand

7.2 Integrating gender into the decent work agenda: active labour market policies



An important element of the ILO decent work agenda from a gender perspective is the commitment to promoting decent work in the informal as well as the formal sector. This comprehensive approach has significant positive implications for women. Likewise the focus on training and literacy development to enhance employability should have positive effects for women as they are the most likely to have inadequate access to training and literacy programmes.

Active labour market policies in labour surplus economies are primarily concerned with the demand-side and the creation of new jobs. This approach has particular benefits for women because of their under representation in any forms of passive social protection. Moreover, women are likely to account for a disproportionate share of the labour surplus in developing economies. In the context of labour surplus, policies such as decreases in minimum wages should be resisted as there is no possibility of a market-established minimum wage. In this context the ILO focus on minimum labour standards should be of particular benefit to women who are disproportionately represented amongst the labour surplus.

### **Core element 8: social protection as a productive factor (not yet developed as a detailed policy agenda)**

#### **8.1 Applying the gender mainstreaming framework**

##### *i) Gender differences in employment and work*

- Women are less likely to be employed in sectors or organisations covered by social protection and social policy. There is a danger that moves to increase flexibility of the labour market may involve excluding certain jobs and sectors from social security contributions which can result in further gender segmentation on social protection lines.
- Social protection over the period of maternity is important both to maintain the health of women and to provide opportunities for employment continuity. Where women are forced to discontinue employment they often suffer considerable occupational downgrading when re-entering employment (Olsen and Walby 2004).
- The expansion of social policy, where this is linked to the direct provision of services rather than to income maintenance, may have an important impact on increasing demand for female labour in the labour market.

##### *ii) Gender differences in the relationships between work and employment and poverty*

- Women are often treated as dependants within the social protection system, particularly with regard to eligibility for support in old age or for unemployment. The treatment of women as dependants is strongly associated with women's vulnerability to poverty when the presumed support of another family member is not available.

##### *iii) Gender differences in capabilities for employment and development*

- 'The substantive freedom to achieve alternative functioning combinations' (Sen 1999) is dependent upon mechanisms to support individuals -- women as well as men -- at times of important life risks. These life risks identified in the global employment agenda as 'sickness, invalidity, old age or maternity in parenthood as well as the loss of income due to a variety of causes' are either likely to affect women equally as men or in some cases more so, as in the

context of maternity in parenthood. Gender inequality in capabilities is unlikely without gender equality in social protection.

## 8.2. Integrating gender into the decent work agenda: social protection as a productive factor

An important part of decent work is the provision of social protection as a form of minimum labour standard. The ILO preferred policy of simplifying labour standards rather than using exclusions or thresholds is of particular significance for women who are likely to fall into categories of employment that fall below such thresholds -- for example where set in relation to working time and continuity of work, place of work such as homeworkers, or by size of enterprise. The global employment agenda perhaps needs to pay particular attention to how social protection systems can be simplified and generalised in the context of developing countries.

The need to bridge the representation gap in the development of new forms of social protection is extremely important with respect to women's interests, particularly in the area of maternity and support in old age.

The decent work agenda needs to be complemented by equity in access to resources that are both complementary to and at times alternatives to paid work. Social protection is concerned with providing access to resources that are not directly linked to the performance of wage work and this decommodification of labour is an essential complement to the notion of decent work. Women have tended to be less than fully protected by systems of decommodification, in part because their role in the wage labour market is seen as more contingent; as long as women's labour remains incompletely commodified, their needs for social protection are hidden within the family and informal economy rather than made explicit in social protection systems.

The increased care burden on women as a result of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in a context of retrenchment in public expenditure must also be considered a significant barrier to women's participation in the wage economy.

### **Core element 9: occupational safety and health: synergies between security and productivity (not yet developed as a detailed policy agenda)**

#### 9.1 Applying the gender mainstreaming framework

##### *i) Gender differences in employment and work*

- Women are more likely to be employed in sectors and enterprises where there is limited attention paid to occupational safety and health due to the size of the enterprise.
- Women are also vulnerable to sexual harassment at work, a factor which undermines their safety and health.

##### *ii) Gender differences in the relationships between work and employment and poverty*

- Pregnant women and those feeding young children have a particular need for adequate protection in respect of occupational safety and health

##### *iii) Gender differences in capabilities for employment and development*

- Vulnerability to health risks at work affects the capabilities of both men and women and poses particular problems for mothers.

- Protection against risks at work is an important part of the collective bargaining agenda but women may be less well represented in organisations covered by effective collective bargaining.

## 9.2 Integrating gender into the decent work agenda: occupational safety and health

There needs to be an explicit commitment in the decent work agenda to include minimum labour standards with respect to pregnancy and motherhood.

Women's underrepresentation among social partners needs to be addressed if collective bargaining is to be the main mechanism for securing occupational safety and health.

## **Core element 10: Productive employment for poverty reduction and development**

### 10.1 Applying the gender mainstreaming framework

#### *i) Gender differences in employment and work*

- Women are more likely than men to be working in the informal economy facing low incomes, insecurity and lack of rights of work
- While many projects aimed at developing the quality and quantity of work in the informal sector have an orientation towards women's employment, the sector chosen for the employment-intensive growth strategy, that of construction and infrastructure development, primarily concerns male labour
- Missing from the policy paper GB.289/ESP/2 is any systematic discussion of the issue of minimum wages and the gender pay gap (Godfrey 2005, Ruber 2003) ; the focus is on employment generation with an implicit reliance on skill development to improve wages but in a labour surplus economy and in a context of gender discrimination, improvements in skills provide no guarantee of reductions in gender inequality

#### *ii) Gender differences in the relationships between work and employment and poverty*

- As the policy paper GB.289/ESP/2 mentions, women are disproportionately represented in poverty and their share of those in poverty has been increasing. Particular concern applies to female-headed households, a category that is tending to increase in developed countries and may also increase in particular contexts in developing countries, such as war zones and as a consequence of early death rates of partners due to AIDS and HIV. Attention also needs to be paid to single male households with responsibility for children as a consequence of the vulnerability of mothers to death from AIDS and HIV as well as childbirth.
- Poverty is not just a problem of low-wage income but also an absence of protection when one is not able to work. The policy paper GB.289/ESP/2 refers to the need for such protection in sickness and old age but there is no mention of the need for protection for maternity.
- The policy paper GB.289/ESP/2 identifies the three main constituents of the informal economy, namely the rural agricultural sector, the non agricultural rural activities sector and the urban informal sector and also recognises that not all those working in the informal sector are poor. This disaggregation is helpful but there is a need for further disaggregation by gender. UNRISD (2005) suggests that in some countries rural agricultural has become increasingly feminised as a consequence of a reduction in the viability of rural

small holdings, causing male labour to seek alternative employment outside the role economy and leaving women to manage the farms on their own account. This suggests a dynamic development of the gender division of labour at both a household and the wage economy level.

- The policy paper GB.289/ESP/2 discusses tendencies towards poverty amongst the rural poor and those in agriculture but the importance of forms of agriculture and of local production networks, often dominated by women, for the prevention of poverty is not analysed. Godfrey (2005) has appointed to the absence of the discussion of rural employment guarantees as currently being considered in India. The question of whether or not access to this employment guarantees will be based on an individual or household basis is critical to its gender effects. Other issues that will need to be addressed is the impact on the unpaid and informal economy of wider access to guaranteed employment in the wage economy.
- Also missing is any discussion directly of the link between the position of women in relation to employment and income and the poverty of children
- The role of women in migration flows needs to be directly addressed. The export of labour across national boundaries is a major part of the relationships between developed and developing countries. Much migration is dependent upon the export of housemaids, an almost entirely feminised category of employment. Internal migration is also important for women with many young rural migrant women being vulnerable to low pay and exploitation in urban environments.

### *iii) Gender differences in capabilities for employment and development*

- The policy paper GB.289/ESP/2 focuses on the clear need for individuals and societies to have the capacity to benefit from employment efforts and in particular focuses on the need for access to education, skills and finance. Much of what is discussed under these headings relates to problems for women, for example the need for the development of micro finance and improved credit and the need for the poor to have access to education and skills. There is indeed detailed discussion of programmes to help poor women entrepreneurs in Vietnam
- The focus on employment-intensive growth in policy paper GB.289/ESP/2 is not analysed by gender. While it is not in itself necessarily a criticism or a problem that construction work is primarily male, as there are many benefits from both increased construction and infrastructure development and from employment intensive growth, the fact that these strategies are likely to mainly benefit men is not commented upon. Furthermore it is worth investigating whether one reason why women are less likely to benefit from such a strategy is that women are already working by and large in employment-intensive sectors and there is less scope for such a policy to change the capital labour ratios.
- The approach to creating decent work within the informal economy is said in policy paper GB.289/ESP/2 to be based on a results-based framework but there is no explicit mention of whether or not results are analysed systematically by gender
- There is some mention within the discussion of a community-based approach to development of gender specific projects or policies. However, in order to go further it would be important to know whether when SMEs are required to

- meet minimum standards when contracting the public service work, there are any effects on the gender composition of employment.
- There is a welcome recognition in the policy paper GB.289/ESP/2 of the need for a particular focus on gender in crisis and war zone areas and for specific programmes and policies in countries where women have tended to be excluded from the labour market for political and religious reasons.

## 10.2 Integrating gender into the decent work agenda: Productive employment for poverty reduction and development

The ILO decent work agenda takes as its starting point that there is no necessary trade-off between quality of employment and quantity. Godfrey (2005) makes the valid point that there is a need both to justify this claim empirically and to address concerns about the potential of trade-offs rather than simply asserting this lack of trade-off as a necessary truth. However in a context where there is recognition of gender discrimination with respect to pay and other aspects of job quality those asserting the existence of such a trade-off and the need not to jeopardise the quantity of employment are in effect suggesting that women should bear the burden of more work for low pay in order to support their families and the wider society. There tends to be no discussion of at which point women should become eligible to receive an appropriate reward for their labour; the treatment of women's claims on the society's resources as always a residual, to be met only when the economy can afford it, should be an approach resisted within the decent work agenda. As a consequence there is a need for more debate and discussion of the appropriate minimum wage levels to be fixed with reference not simply to a gender neutral discussion of potential trade-offs between quantity and quality of work but also with reference to the tendency for women's labour to be undervalued, such that, for example, minimum wage policy is a means of countering discrimination in the labour market.

The high level of employment-intensity in many female-dominated sectors calls into question to some extent the notion that the global employment agenda can be achieved through employment-intensive growth. In female sectors it may be more important to focus on means of raising productivity and at the same time ensuring that women are not displaced by men once jobs move towards higher productivity levels.

The decent work agenda also involves the promotion of wider participation in the labour market and of rejecting the exclusion of women on political and religious grounds. This approach needs to be extended through the rejection of policies that focus on the household as a unit without reference to the rights of individuals. The rights of women for access to complementary resources such as education and credit need also to be stressed. The global employment agenda identifies the potential need for land reform and the redistribution of other assets through tax policy and minimum wages but this debate needs to be expanded to include a gender dimension to ensure that existing differentiation by gender is taken into account.

The global employment agenda recognises that 'poverty is not merely income deprivation, but vulnerability arising from the absence of social protection, discrimination in labour markets, and the absence of empowerment.' Women are more vulnerable on each of these four dimensions. The empowerment of poor women

requires attention to be paid to their representation gap in the development of pro poor policies or PRSPs. Similarly in the promotion of good governance, attention needs to be paid to the forms of governance that tend to benefit women with particular attention to be paid to the possibilities of cooperatives as a means of empowerment of the poor and of women in particular.

Finally, attention needs to be paid to the role of women in trends in population growth, migration and fertility. A global employment agenda without a perspective on population, migration flows and fertility does not as Godfrey (2005) points out makes sense, as it is these demographic trends in conjunction with employment trends and social organisation that will determine whether or not economies continue to be in labour surplus. In the developed world, the problems of low fertility are closely linked to the problems of an ageing society and again the gender perspective needs to be brought into play in understanding the interplay between the employment agenda, the social protection agenda and the demographic trends. Esping-Andersson (2002) Has shown a clear positive link between higher fertility and women's employment opportunities, countering the view that childbearing is an alternative to female labour force participation in developed economies. A clear way of protecting and promoting the welfare state in the developed world, and thereby countering poverty, is to promote either fertility or migration in order to reduce the problems of an ever smaller working age population supporting an expanding older population. Developing economies may have different and indeed more complex relations between women's employment opportunities, fertility trends and population growth, with infant mortality trends another important intervening variable. The need for the global employment agenda aimed at poverty reduction to stress the interlinkages between women's employment opportunities, fertility and infant mortality is, however, clearcut.

