

FROM SCHOOL TO DECENT WORK

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Women continue to be more likely than men to be trapped in poverty and exploitation with no or limited access to decent work opportunities. Winning the battle of women's economic empowerment requires action on several fronts.

First, girls' access to quality education is crucial. Over the last decades, significant progress was made regarding girls' enrolment in primary and secondary schools. But more needs to be done to ensure their access to quality education in all fields, including those that are still male dominated such as science.

Unfortunately the progress made in education has not yet translated into more and better employment for women. Where the transition from school to work is problematic, young women are always more affected than their male counterparts. In fact, a recent ILO report shows that globally, women are more likely to be unemployed or to work informally than men. And they earn only 77% of what men do!

So the second front of action is securing women - and in particular young women's - access to the labour market. This requires to eliminate the obstacles preventing them from getting and keeping a job such as gender stereotypes, discrimination, gender-biased corporate culture, early marriages, early or unwanted pregnancies and difficulties in reconciling work with care responsibilities.



"Aiming to get more women into jobs is not enough. The quality of jobs matters," says Claire Courteille.
Plan International / Richard Wainwright

However, aiming to get more women into jobs is not enough. The quality of jobs matters. A third front of action is therefore about ensuring decent work for young women. Only quality jobs

can contribute to young women's empowerment allowing them to make full use of their potential, start a family if they wish so and contribute to the development of their country.

But what is a decent job? Recurrent problems for millions of young women workers around the world are sexual harassment and gender-based violence at the workplace. In these economies with high levels of youth unemployment, young women are particularly vulnerable to abuses. Too often, the victims remain silent out of fear of being fired. A decent job is a job free from violence and discrimination, adequately paid, respectful of workers' rights with safe working conditions and offering access to social protection including maternity protection.

Cultural traditions and economic conditions cannot excuse discrimination against women and girls, and other violations of their human rights.

Countries can no longer afford to lose out on women's social and economic potential. But this is not just about economics. Young women have the right to take control of their own destiny and strive for self-realisation.

Last year, the international community agreed on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". This agenda creates momentum which we have to use to make gender equality and empowerment of women and girls (Goal 5) and Decent Work for All (Goal 8) a reality. In the words of ILO Director General Guy Ryder "Let's work together to achieve genuine gender equality and women's empowerment in the world of work. Decent work for women brings decent lives for all."

#DIDYOUKNOW

SOLUTIONS FOR YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

S4YE is a multi-stakeholder coalition of public sector, private sector, and civil society actors which aims to provide leadership and resources for strong action to increase the number of young people around the world engaged in productive work. The S4YE coalition was founded by Accenture, the International Labour Organization, the International Youth Foundation, RAND Corporation, the World Bank, Youth Business International and Plan International.

Economic empowerment through quality jobs and productive employment enables young women to become critical agents of change and channel their capacities into the creation of a better world. S4YE envisages a world where all young people between the ages of 15 and 29 have access to work opportunities that empower them to escape poverty and boost shared prosperity worldwide.

The basic approach of S4YE is to focus on investing in effective and sustainable solutions to unemployment, based on bringing different players together and learning from what works for youth employment. The focus is especially on regions where youth employment challenges remain most pressing and on inclusion of vulnerable youth, in particular girls and young women, in decent work.

S4YE also aims to develop a better understanding of the demand side and skills needed by employers, the role of technology in shaping the labour market and the workforce and effective ways to promote entrepreneurship, self-employment and quality jobs.

The S4YE coalition has set the ambitious target of providing support for employment and productive work to 150 million youth by 2030. This will have a tremendous positive impact on girls' economic empowerment around the world.

More info at www.s4ye.org

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