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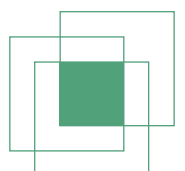
Promoting Equality and Addressing Discrimination



Weaving workshop. Addis-Ababa.

6.1 PROMOTING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: A GENDERED PATHWAY OUT OF INFORMALITY

■ This brief examines the differing situations of women and men in the informal economy. Although clearly not a homogenous group, women tend to experience greater discrimination in the labour market and have greater exposure to shocks and risks than men. The same problems that are entrenched in the formal economy: occupational segregation, gender wage gaps, limited access to resources and the burdens of unpaid work, are mirrored in the informal economy, and are often even more problematic. Strategies for a gender mainstreaming approach to policy formulation in all areas related to the informal economy are proposed, as well as gender specific interventions to overcome embedded disadvantages.



KEY CHALLENGES

■ Gender and informality

- Unpaid work – a critical barrier to obtaining decent work
- Discrimination – an important determinant of economic outcomes for women in the informal economy
- Women's work in the informal economy
 - Data
 - Vulnerable Employment
 - Homework
 - Domestic Work

■ **Gender and informality.** While the informal economy is made up of both men and women, closer examination reveals important differences between them. Women - in both urban and rural settings - are often clustered in the most vulnerable segments of the informal economy. They are likely to have fewer economic assets¹ than men and have less access to productive resources such as land, technology, finance, networks and market information. Low rates of literacy and limited skills – often confined to traditional 'female-oriented' skills – usually mean that their economic activities are plagued by market saturation, low productivity and low incomes. Combined with insufficient knowledge of labour rights and the absence of organization and representation, women in the informal economy often have even weaker bargaining power than men. At the survivalist end of the informal economy their enterprises are invariably fragile and prone to failure as they struggle to balance the demands of earning an income with their household responsibilities.

The recent global economic and financial crisis has impacted on women in particular ways including for example compounding their paid and unpaid informal work burdens. Evidence suggests that income and employment trends during the crisis - decreasing demand and wages aggravated by rising competition - were strongest in the low paid sub-sectors where women are concentrated. As a result, the relative socio-economic position of poor working women and their families has deteriorated.²

Yet, it is women's work – whether the poorly paid work in the informal economy or the unpaid work in the household - which holds families and communities together. Moreover, where opportunities have opened up for women they have seized them and have become dynamic economic actors contributing to the economic re-generation of whole communities. The literature is replete with evidence that women can be key to breaking poverty cycles from one generation to the next, in a manner that is less evident for men. Evidence shows that when women have been able to increase their incomes and have increased control over resources, the impacts can be seen on the multiple dimensions of poverty: from reduced fertility, lower infant mortality and maternal deaths, less child labour, more children in school,

● Although not a homogenous group, women experience different realities, constraints and risks than men in the informal economy

What does gender equality mean?

Gender equality refers to the enjoyment of equal rights, opportunities and treatment by men and women, girls and boys in all spheres of life. It asserts that people's rights, responsibilities, social status, and access to resources should not depend on whether they are born male or female. It does not however mean that men and women are the same or must become the same or that all labour market measures must arrive at the same results. Gender equality implies that all men and women are free to develop their personal abilities and make life choices without limitations set by stereotypes or prejudices about gender roles or the characteristics of men and women.

Source: ILO 2007 ABC of Women Workers' Rights and gender equality. (ILO, Geneva)

1 For more details see Resources section to access: UNIFEM 2005 Progress of the World's Women 2005: Women work and poverty

2 For more information see Resources section to access: Horn, Zoe Elena(2010) 'The effects of the global economic crisis on women in the informal economy: research findings from WIEGO and the Inclusive Cities partners'

better health, educational and nutritional status of families, through to better human capital formation for the future labour market.³

It is therefore not only for a matter of rights that policy makers need to address discrimination and gender inequality for women in poor communities in the informal economy, it is also a matter of sound economic sense. Women's work represents an enormous untapped productive potential for societies and economies. The challenge remains to reach women in the many 'invisible' and marginalised segments of the informal economy including in domestic work, homework, unpaid market work for family members, casual wage work, and own account work. Additionally, irrespective of the type of productive work women are engaged it is equally important to address the limitations placed upon them by their household responsibilities.

Women, Decent Work deficits and the Informal Economy

In all the different dimensions of Decent Work, women in the informal economy experience disadvantage and marginalization.

Employment: women's income activities tend to be poorly remunerated with low productivity; their access to skills which could open up new income opportunities is limited; where they are entrepreneurs and own account workers, barriers in access to productive assets including finance impede the growth of their enterprises. Occupational segregation is a deeply entrenched problem with women often clustered in female-dominated sectors including in services, domestic work, homework, as well as own account activities linked to their gender roles (for example food-vending, tailoring).

Social Protection: Though often most in need, given their care-giving role in societies, women have fewer means to care for themselves and their families despite their heavier burdens. They may be involved in hazardous work in unhealthy and unsafe workplaces. Lack of maternity protection in the informal economy make them physically vulnerable to unsafe childbirth and even maternal death. Childcare facilities are rare within the informal economy, increasing the care burdens of many women and limiting their employment and income choices. There is also evidence that women are even more susceptible to HIV and AIDs than men.

Social dialogue: Women are often unorganised and unrepresented in the informal economy. Their voices are often even less heard than men's in community and national affairs. In some segments of the informal economy such as domestic work and industrial outwork, they are largely invisible when working in private homes. This makes their organization even more difficult, while their isolation further weakens their bargaining power.

Rights: For various reasons women in the informal economy may be unable to articulate their needs and access their rights at work. Additionally, gender differentiated earnings in the informal economy mirror and even surpass that of the formal economy; and women are likely to experience numerous forms of discrimination in the labour market.

3 M. Buvini et al. (eds): Equality for women: Where do we stand on Millennium Development Goal 3? (Washington, DC, World Bank, 2008), pp. 5-6.

■ **Unpaid work – a critical barrier to decent work.** Unpaid work can be understood to comprise all productive activities outside the official labour market done by individuals for their own households. In analytical terms it is often called ‘reproductive work’ in that it is work that is primarily done in households to continue to reproduce the labour force on a daily basis. Hence it includes cooking, cleaning, shopping, gathering fuel and water, sanitation, childcare, elderly care, caring for the sick and infirm, and the whole range of activities required to maintain a household. Though variation is apparent based on different cultural, religious, historical contexts of a given society, in every society in the world the majority of this work is done by women. Sometimes also termed the gender division of labour in the home, this phenomenon has tremendous impact on women’s ability to earn a remunerative income, upgrade their skills and join in social dialogue. For women in the informal economy their ability to seek viable paid work is entirely contingent on the extent of their daily family responsibilities. In poor communities weak infrastructure and scarce services impact negatively on all members on the community. But for women involved in informal activities lack of utilities, sanitation, water supplies, roads can intensify their care burdens and reduce the time they have available to earn an income. Though efforts are increasing to make visible unpaid work, give it value and include it in Systems of National Accounts as a key economic resource, policy makers rarely take unpaid work into account in policy formulation, often considering it a private responsibility and an unlimited resource.

● Unpaid work burdens are intensified in situations of informality and poverty, placing enormous barriers in the way of earning a decent income

■ **Discrimination – an important determinant of economic outcomes for women in the informal economy.** Inequalities accumulate throughout life and through generations. Socio-cultural attitudes can limit opportunities for girl children and young women to gain the skills and assets needed to escape poverty and enter decent employment in adulthood. The high numbers of young women in the informal economy can be attributed to a variety of factors – from parent’s decision to favour the education of sons, social norms hindering girls schooling, child labour, early pregnancy, the burden of household chores, lack of training for skills in demand in the formal economy, to discrimination in recruitment by employers and occupational segregation. These factors accumulate to constrain the choices and visions of many young women who in turn produce a new generation unable to escape poverty and enter the formal labour market.

■ **Women’s work in the informal economy.** Informal employment is generally a larger source of employment for women than for men in the developing world. ILO estimates from 2002 reveal that, other than in North Africa where 43 percent of women workers are in informal employment, 60 percent of women in developing countries are in non-agricultural informal employment. In sub-Saharan Africa 84 percent of women non-agricultural workers are informally employed compared to 63 percent of male non-agricultural workers; in Latin America 58 percent of women in comparison to 48 percent for men. In Asia, the proportion of men and women non agricultural employment is roughly equivalent⁴. Average earnings are lower in the informal economy than in the formal economy. However, it is difficult to generalize: some formal wage workers may be poorer than, for example, informal employers. Men tend to be over-represented in the top segment of earnings and women in the lower segment⁵.

4 For more details see Resources section to access: ILO 2002 Women and Men in the informal economy: A statistical picture

5 Chen, M. December 2008. “Addressing Informality, Reducing Poverty” in Job, Jobs, Jobs, Poverty in Focus Number 16, (International Poverty Centre, Brasilia), p. 6.

- **Data.** Not only are women more likely to be in the informal economy than men, they tend to be in the more precarious segments of it. Data reveals that:
 - Women tend to be concentrated in certain segments of the informal economy, making up 80 percent or more of homeworkers (industrial outworkers) and 30-90 percent of street vendors (except in societies that restrict women's mobility)⁶
 - The link between working in the informal economy and being poor is stronger for women than men, not only because of their concentration in the survivalist end of the informal economy but because of significant wage gaps even where they do the same type of work. In the higher-income segments of the informal economy, women tend to be engaged in smaller-scale operations with less growth potential compared to those performed by men.⁷
 - Women are more likely than men to be in those informal activities that are undercounted, such as production for own consumption, paid domestic work in private households and homework⁸
 - Women are also more likely than men to be in small-scale economic units where their economic contributions are invisible and therefore not counted.⁹
- **Vulnerable Employment.** The less developed the region, the greater the likelihood that women are among the ranks of the contributing family workers or own-account workers who together make up the recently defined 'vulnerable employment' groups which are often closely linked with understanding informality. Female contributing family workers, in particular, are not likely to be economically independent¹⁰. As revealed by the diagram below at the global level, the share of vulnerable employment in total female employment was 52.7 percent in 2007, compared to 49.1 percent for men. Female own-account workers registered a strong increase between 1997 and 2007, representing an important source of employment for women in the informal economy, though it has lower earnings than other informal activities such as informal wage work and employer¹¹ (See also brief on Measurement of the Informal Economy).

6 Ibid.

7 For more information see Resources section to access: International Labour Conference, 90th session 2002. Report VI Decent Work and the Informal Economy, ILO Geneva

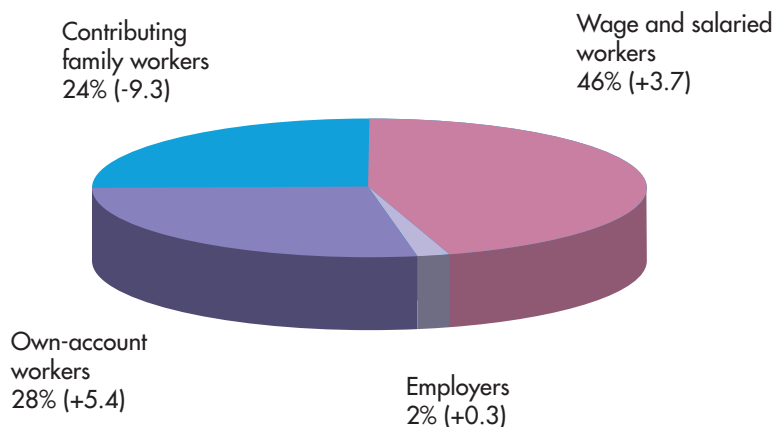
8 Ibid

9 Ibid

10 The international classification of status in employment defines four statuses: (1) wage and salaried workers; (2) employers; (3) own-account workers; and (4) contributing family workers. Vulnerable employment refers to persons who are employed under relatively precarious circumstances as indicated by their status in employment. Because contributing family workers and own-account workers are less likely to have formal work arrangements, access to benefits or social protection programmes and are more "at risk" with regard to economic cycles, these are the statuses categorized as "vulnerable". The vulnerable employment rate is thus calculated as the sum of own-account workers and contributing family workers as a percentage of total employment. The indicator is highly gender sensitive since, historically, contributing family work is a status that is dominated by women. See also ILO: Key Indicators of the Labour Market, fifth edition (Geneva, 2007), Chapter 1.

11 For more details see Resources section to access: ILO 2009 Report VI Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work Report

Distribution of female status in employment, 2007 (percentage point change from 1997 in parentheses)



Source: ILO: Global Employment Trends for Women, March 2009 (Geneva, 2009), figure 4, p.12

More recently, the current estimate of the number of workers in vulnerable employment in 2009 is 1.53 billion, an increase of more than 146 million since 1999. The highest shares of vulnerable employment are in South Asia (78.5 per cent of total employment in 2009), Sub-Saharan Africa (75.8 per cent) and South-East Asia and the Pacific (61.8 per cent). In all regions except the Developed Economies and European Union and Central and South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) and CIS, the vulnerable employment rate among women exceeds that of men, with the largest gender gaps observed in North Africa (over 21 percentage points difference between the sexes), Sub-Saharan Africa and the Middle East (both with a gap of more than 14 percentage points).¹²

- Homework.** Homework, is often a survivalist strategy in the informal economy. Women tend to be over-represented in this sector, particularly as industrial outworkers who have to absorb all of the non-wage costs of production while enjoying very little of the value added. In some cases it is unclear whether the homeworker is a dependent worker or an independent own-account worker. (see brief on the Employment relationship) Homework is often at the lowest end of some global value chains with complex layers of subcontracting making it difficult to establish clear employment relationships and responsibilities. Homework is often characterised by long hours, poor pay, little social protection, safety and health hazards, high dependence on the subcontractor, as well as extreme isolation making it difficult to organize or bargain effectively. Enforcing compliance with regulation through labour inspections is considerably hampered given that work takes place in a private home. (see also briefs on Homework and the Employment Relationship).

● Homework and domestic work are predominately female occupations, characterised by poor working conditions, isolation, and high levels of dependence on employers and contractors

¹² For more details see Resources section to access: ILO Global Employment Trends 2011: The challenge of a jobs recovery

- **Domestic Work.** Domestic work as a service sector continues to increase globally, fuelled by supply and demand factors. On the demand side demographic changes such as aging populations, decline in welfare provision, increasing labour force participation of women in urban areas and developed countries increase the need for domestic work. On the supply side, rural poverty and gender discrimination in the labour market ensure a continuous supply of workers, mainly women, into the sector. Like homework, paid domestic work is difficult to regulate and monitor. In some cases it is embedded within socio-cultural structures which make it difficult for employers to see themselves as such. The isolation and vulnerability of domestic workers is made more complex by their invisibility in private homes and their high dependence on the good will of their employers. Moreover, issues of gender, class, ethnicity and caste also come into play heightening the weak bargaining power of domestic workers. Where domestic work is the result of migration, irregular migration status can add further layers of vulnerability. (see also briefs on Domestic workers and Migrant workers).



Picking cotton, Uzbekistan.

- Applying a gender lens in policy formulation
- Gender specific action
 - Skills development and girls' education
 - Regularizing Domestic Work
 - Improving access to resources
 - Strengthening organisation of women in the informal economy
 - Making unpaid visible and giving it value
- Mainstreaming gender in policy formulation on informality
 - Extending Social Protection
 - Democratising national budget processes
 - Pro-poor growth strategies
 - Balancing productive and reproductive work
- ILO work's work on gender equality

■ **Applying a gender lens in policy formulation.** In the same way that the transition to formality will take a comprehensive and integrated approach and should be seen in progressive terms, addressing gender inequality in the informal economy requires action across every policy area covered in this Policy Resource guide. The policy and diagnostic tool which structures this Resource identifies seven policy areas (as discussed in the Key Conceptual Issues brief). Action on gender equality needs to be taken within each of the seven policy areas (horizontal deepening) as well as across all the policy areas (vertical integration) to ensure policy coherence and widest possible impact. It is also essential that solutions targeting women's empowerment in these policies be expressed clearly and simply, so as to make them accessible to the non-gender specialists ultimately responsible for their implementation.

● Gender mainstreaming is required in all areas of policy formulation for the informal economy. Gender specific policy approaches may also be appropriate

All policy making requires a gender lens to understand and take into account the differing experiences and activities of men and women in the informal economy and their differing choices and constraints. Anticipating different impacts of policies on both women and men and promoting strategies which are more likely to result in equitable outcomes will go a long way in supporting the transition to formality in the informal economy.

ILO constituents at the International Labour Conference 2009 discussion on *Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work*, endorsed both a gender mainstreaming and a gender specific approach towards decent work. Gender mainstreaming means that all interventions must take into account the different situations of men and women. Gender specific action is often necessary to overcome entrenched disadvantage of one or the other sex. The two approaches are entirely complementary. An either/or approach risks that gender mainstreaming alone cannot address specific vulnerability, while a gender specific approach alone risks marginalisation from core budgets and policies. To illustrate what this may mean in practice – a policy on

upgrading enterprises would need take into account the situation of both men and women, including understanding structural constraints on women such as their more limited access to resources and the constraints imposed by their unpaid work responsibilities. Resources would need to be devoted to enterprises owned not just by men but also those owned by women (mainstreaming); and where relevant, specific targeted programmes could be put in place to support women's entrepreneurship (gender specific action). The latter would enable women to move from marginal activities to growth oriented enterprises.

■ **Gender specific action.** The ILO's WEDGE programme (Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality programme) is a very good illustration of gender specific action which seeks to overcome the disadvantage of a particular sex. Programmes like WEDGE acknowledge the constraints on female micro-entrepreneurs including barriers to access to property, income, credit, skills technology, information, networks and markets. WEDGE has been working in different regions of the world, but primarily in Africa where several thousand women have undergone training and capacity building to enable their businesses to grow. WEDGE has developed a wealth of tools and resources to support women entrepreneurs at many levels – from the individual entrepreneur, to building networks and strengthening the capacities of relevant ministries to encourage women's entrepreneurship. (See brief on Informal Enterprises).

The following are also examples of gender specific action in the informal economy. Mainstreaming examples will follow thereafter.

- **Skills development and girls' education.** International policy discussions and national commitments under the Millennium Development Goals have endorsed educating girls as a key way to break poverty cycles. It can also open up opportunities for girls to enter formal labour markets as adults. Many countries, including Bangladesh have been providing incentives to parents ranging from food products to cash transfers and scholarships to ensure girls continue in schooling. Given that child labour reproduces the informal economy through the generations and that, conversely, there is strong evidence that educated girls are able to move out of poverty, these efforts promise in the longer term to have a significant impact on informality at least in its most marginalized segments.¹³
- **Regularizing Domestic Work.** Efforts are being made in numerous countries to bring domestic work, a sector infamous for its poor working conditions and limited regulation, under the ambit of the law. Progress in different countries will be catalysed by the new international labour standards adopted by the ILO on domestic work (see brief Domestic work). While changing or enforcing legal frameworks is critical, helping this large and unprotected sector move out of informality will require action at many levels. Other strategies undertaken by ILO social partners include organising and mobilising the sector and encouraging their participation in wider social dialogue mechanisms. Innovative strategies include efforts

● With the appropriate supports to encourage formality, entrepreneurship can be an important source of job creation and a means of increasing incomes for poor women

● Educating girls has proven to be one of the most important ways of breaking poverty cycles and is likely to have significant impacts on access to formal jobs in the longer term

● The adoption of international standards and efforts at the national level are seeing the progression of domestic work – a very large, female-dominated sector – out of informality

¹³ One study estimates that if the countries in South Asia, Sub Saharan Africa and the Middle East and North Africa had started with the gender gap in average years of schooling that East Asia had in 1960 and had closed that gender gap at the rate achieved by East Asia from 1960-1992, their per capita income could have grown by 0.5-0.9 percentage points higher per year – substantial increases over actual growth figures. Another study estimates that even for middle and high income countries with higher initial education levels, an increase of 1 percentage point in the share of women with secondary education is associated with an increase in per capita income of 0.3 percentage point. Both studies control for other variables commonly found in growth literature. Source: ILO 2009 Guidelines on gender in employment, ILO, Geneva. Original example from World Bank, 2001, Engendering Development Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources and Voice, Oxford University Press, Oxford

● Overcoming discrimination in access to productive resources can significantly open up new income and employment opportunities for women

by India to pilot certification of the skills of domestic workers, thereby not only giving formal recognition to their skills but also facilitating their occupational mobility into better paid service sectors.

- **Improving access to resources.** Discrimination in access to productive resources curtails the economic activities of many women, and conversely enhancing access to resources can significantly increase income and productivity. For example projections from Burkina Faso, Cameroon and Kenya have estimated that more equal control of inputs and farm income by women and men could raise farm yields by as much as 20 per cent of current output.¹⁴ Increasing women's productivity by improving the circumstances of women farmers could substantially increase food production in Sub Saharan Africa, and at the same time reduce the level of food insecurity in the region. If the results from the above countries were to hold true in other parts of Sub Saharan Africa as a whole, simply raising the productivity of women to the same level as men could increase total production by 10 to 15 per cent¹⁵.

Microfinance is often highlighted as example of a resource which has opened up gateways for women to enter new income new income opportunities around the world. Lessons learned from the past decades include the importance of ensuring women are able retain control over the finance rather than other family members. Micro-financial services – which by the end of 2006 had reached over 79 million of the poorest women in the world¹⁶ – have enabled female clients to develop their businesses, registering higher repayment rates. Research shows a positive side-effect, in that the income generated by female borrowers was invested in their households, for children's education and better health and nutrition practices than in other households. Female children of women microfinance clients also reap the benefits, as there is an increased likelihood of full-time school enrolment and lower drop-out rates for girls. (See brief on Microfinance). Again, while changing legal frameworks to enable women to own and access assets and resources is critical, an integrated strategy ensures the greatest impact. For example the enhancement of skills is often most effective when accompanied by access to finance and market information. Similarly changes in laws regarding land ownership which benefit women have a wider impact when productive supports are put in place such as access to technology and finance.

- **Strengthening organization of women in the informal economy.** Social partners around the world have been stepping up their efforts to reach the great majority of informal economy workers and entrepreneurs. Women are still poorly represented in social dialogue institutions and this representational gap is one of the key barriers impeding women's access to a range of services as well as the enjoyment of their rights at work. In some countries women in some of the most marginalised sectors such as domestic work, homework and own account work have successfully organised, not only at local level but national level and beyond. Prominent examples include SEWA, alliances of domestic workers, and Homenet, which have mobilised international attention to their working conditions and working needs. In some cases women have formed their own associations, in others they have joined trade unions or cooperatives

14 ILO 2009, Guidelines on gender in employment policies Op.cit. The example is originally from World Bank World Bank, 2001, Engendering Development Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources and Voice, Oxford University Press, Oxford

15 ILO 2009, Guidelines on gender in employment policies op.cit The original research is from Bladen, M. Canagarajah, S. Klasen, S., Lawson, D. Gender and Growth in Sub Saharan Africa UNU-WIDER Research Paper 2006/37, p 13

16 Daly-Harris, S., 2007. Microfinance Summit Campaign Report (ILO, Geneva).

to strengthen their voice and bargaining power. (See the briefs within the section on Organization, Representation and Social Dialogue).

- **Making unpaid visible and giving it value.** The unpaid work that women do in the household is often treated as a free and unlimited resource by policymakers, yet the costs to women are high in terms of loss of opportunities to earn better incomes, upgrade skills, as well as participate in social dialogue and have their voices heard. Countries are making greater effort to collect information on unpaid work through Time-Use surveys. Intra-household surveys could also be used to move beyond the traditional male-headed household model to capture the different types of households, decisions and gender divisions of labour.¹⁷ These instruments can help gather the data, give it economic value and include it in Systems of National Accounts. In South Korea for example three valuation surveys were used to measure housework. Calculations based on the results estimated that women's unpaid work amounted to between 13-23 percent of GDP in 1999. Policy formulation developed on the basis of this information included insurance for fulltime housewives, childcare and after-school programmes and sharing of conjugal assets in the event of divorce¹⁸.

■ **Mainstreaming gender in policy formulation on informality.** The examples above show gender specific action whereby efforts are made to overcome entrenched disadvantage of one sex. Gender specific action however should be accompanied by mainstreaming support in policy formulation. The following are examples which can support mainstreaming in different policy areas.

- **Extending Social Protection.** Overcoming social protection gaps is particularly important given the role that women have as care givers and income earners and their greater vulnerability to risks and shocks. ILO research has assessed various strategies for extending social security benefits to those who are not covered by any existing scheme. Among these, the ILO has paid special attention to “gradual extension of social insurance schemes, the introduction of special arrangements for informal economy workers, the provision of non-contributory social pensions, the development of programmes combining cash transfer and access to education and health, and employment guarantee schemes.”¹⁹ Based on recent analysis and evidence of social protection issues in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the ILO is promoting basic universal social security benefits as one of the central themes of its global campaign for the extension of social security for all.²⁰ Extending social protection to vulnerable groups is critical. Interesting and positive results have been experienced in a number of countries that have targeted women in particular. Important gains in family nutritional, educational and health status have been seen in many countries. (see brief on Social security) In Ivory Coast and Ghana for example, research has revealed that when women's income increased, they spent the extra on more food for the family, whereas increases in men's income did not make a significant difference²¹. In South

17 ILO: Social Care Needs and Service Provisions in Arab States: Bringing Care Work into Focus in Lebanon, Policy Brief 1, Beirut, 2008.

18 For more details see Resources section to access: United Nations, Integrating Unpaid Work into National Policies,

19 For more information see Resources section to access: Chant, S. Pedwell, C. 2008. Women, Gender and the Informal Economy. An Assessment of ILO Research and Suggested Ways Forward

20 *ibid*

21 ILO 2009, Guidelines on gender in employment policies Op.cit ILO, Geneva. The example is originally from UNICEF, The State of the World's Children 2006, New York

Africa, a study on pensions revealed that when grandmothers received pensions, the nutritional status of grandchildren living with them improved in ways that were not evident for grandfathers²². Similarly in Brazil, children experienced improved health outcomes when women controlled increased income in households²³.

Evidence is accumulating on the significant impact that the integration of gender perspectives into social security instruments and tools, has on poverty reduction.²⁴ Indeed while extending social protection can considerably enhance the wellbeing of poor communities and combat their social exclusion, it is often women and their families that can benefit in particular. Some countries have been experimenting with providing cash transfer targeted to women in particular with notable results. Bolsa Familia, for example, has been an important plank in Brazil's poverty alleviation efforts and has primarily been targeted toward women in poor and rural communities, to increase household incomes in ways that will directly combat poverty.

Morocco has been evaluating the impacts of its national budgets in terms of gender equality

● Pro-poor growth research from India has shown that those states that invested highly in education managed to reduce gender gaps which in turn resulted in higher poverty elasticity

- **Democratising national budget processes.** Gender responsive budgeting (GRB) is a tool that can transform traditional budgeting processes by analysing their impacts on gender equality. Pioneered in the 1980s, the process has inspired others to explore the potential of GRB, notably in the Commonwealth.²⁵ Over 40 countries are using GRB initiatives at different levels of their economies.²⁶ To illustrate, it can be used for example, to examine the linkages between unpaid work and paid work, or the expenditures on infrastructural development which relieve the household work burdens on a particular sex. When applied to policies and resource allocation for the informal economy, it can help reveal the differing impacts of policies on both sexes. Gender Responsive Budgeting can be an important means of integrating gender issues into macro-economic policymaking and public expenditure. Pioneering efforts in gender responsive budgeting are taking place in a number of countries. Since 2006, in Morocco for example, efforts are being made to evaluate the impact of national budgets on gender equality. As part of an integrated approach Ministries of Finance, Education, Health, and Agriculture and Rural Development are to report on results achieved in accordance with gender equality objectives²⁷.
- **Pro-poor growth strategies.** The brief on *Patterns of Economic Growth and Informality* emphasised the critical importance of placing employment at the heart of economic and social policies. It positions employment as the key nexus between growth and poverty reduction and a key dimension of the enabling environment for formalisation. Within that framework it has become increasingly recognised that employment strategies need to be gender sensitive. Indeed experience from many newly industrialised countries shows that one of the paths towards formal employment creation - manufacturing in export sectors - is often highly reliant on female labour. Many East Asian economies for example have been able to compete in the world market by relying heavily on the female labour force in export industries. This accounted for a significant share of their high growth rates.²⁸

22 Ibid. The example is originally from World Bank 2006 World Development Report 2006, New York, 2005

23 Ibid.

24 Destremau, 2007; Destremau with Abi Yaghi, 2007; ILO, 2007 c, d.

25 See ILO: Overview of gender-responsive budget initiatives, GENDER discussion paper, Geneva, p. 6; and Commonwealth Secretariat, 2005, op. cit., p. 40.

26 H. Hofbauer Balmori, Gender and budgets: Overview report (Brighton, University of Sussex, BRIDGE development-gender, 2003), p. 47.

27 For more details see Resources section to access: Youtube – Gender Responsive budgeting, Morocco

28 ILO 2009, Guidelines on gender in employment policies. Op.cit The original example is from Klasen, S. Pro Poor growth and gender : What can we learn from the literature and the OPPG Case Studies ? Discussion paper to the OPPG Working Group of AFD, DFID, BMZ and the World Bank

Pro-poor growth is not possible unless efforts are made to build the capacities of women to both participate in and benefit from economic growth. Case studies from the World Bank's Operationalizing Pro Poor Growth research has shown for example that in India²⁹, those states that had high investments in education managed to reduce gender gaps which in turn resulted in higher poverty elasticity. The short term costs of education were paid off in terms of reduced poverty. Building capacities and pro-poor growth strategies can feed into processes of formalisation. The case studies from different income level countries show that reducing education and employment gaps for women result in higher rates of pro poor growth. Key factors include education and skills development for girls and women as well as increased access to productive resources. The impacts can be seen in reduced fertility, export-oriented employment and access to formal employment for women.³⁰

- **Balancing productive and reproductive work.** Gender mainstreaming strategies in every policy area will need to address one of the most difficult barriers to women progressing towards decent work – unpaid work. For example a skills development and human resource development policy would need to develop strategies and targets to ensure women are able to access training in spite of family responsibilities. This may be through childcare provision, training subsidies, transport allowances, flexible delivery schedules etc. A number of countries involved in Community Based Training (CBT Tree) have developed mobile training units and flexible delivery schedules to take into account women's paid and unpaid work burdens in poor and rural communities. (See brief on Skills and Employability) Similarly an employment guarantee scheme would need to take similar measures to ensure women are able to equally participate with men. India's National Rural Employment Guarantee programme for example has explicitly targeted women as well as men, and provided the sorts of childcare, transport allowances and other supports that are likely to facilitate women's participation.

India is using childcare support, flexible timing, transport allowances and other supports to encourage women participate in its National Rural Employment Guarantee programme

Governments and the enterprises have an important role in alleviating some unpaid work burdens through provision of childcare, ensuring flexibility for working parents as well as prioritising infrastructural development to relieve women's household responsibilities. In the longer term, a more equitable division of labour between the sexes within a household will enable women to better balance paid and unpaid work demands.

■ **ILO work's work on gender equality.** The ILO has long recognised the importance of gender equality in the world of work and has made a sustained commitment to support equitable outcomes through the four pillars of decent work. The 2009 International Labour Conference's Resolution on Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work, firmly endorsed an immediate and long term strategy to overcome entrenched inequality in the world of work. The ILO's tripartite partners resoundingly supported gender equality not only from a rights based perspective but also because of its profound economic benefits. Supporting the progression of the many millions of women and men in the informal economy towards formality and decent work is an essential part of that strategy.

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid.*

The ILO's technical cooperation work continues to reflect the importance of promoting gender equality for those in the informal economy. For example the Gender Poverty and Employment (GPE) programme has been implemented in a number of Latin American countries over several years. It has worked with national commissions for equal opportunities and Ministries of Labour and Social Welfare to build their capacities in gender mainstreaming, particularly in employment policies. The Tripartite commissions established as an institutional framework continue to function as active and energetic networks including research on gender equality. Similarly a regional initiative on Gender Equality and Workers' Rights in the Informal Economies of Arab States has been highly effective. Labour rights and other human rights standards are used to identify the problems facing informal economy workers as well as the economic, cultural, political and social causes of informality. Three main strategies are used: the extension of social protection as a means to reverse informalization, workers' agency and voice in order to prioritize the rights of workers through organisation strategies; and generating gender responsive statistics to influence policy making.



Woman cutting hay for cattle, Indonesia.

RESOURCES

This section provides a list of resources which can enable the reader to delve deeper into the issue. Details of the good practices cited above can be accessed here. The section comprises international instruments, International Labour Conference conclusions, relevant publications and training tools. A bibliography of references in the text is further below. There may be some overlap between the two.

ILO and UN Instruments and ILC Conference conclusions

(NB Most ILO Conventions and Recommendations are relevant for promoting gender equality, a few key ones are noted here)

Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)

Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)

Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156)

Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183)

Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87)

Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98)

Homework Convention, 1996, (No.177)

R198 Employment Relationship Recommendation, 2006

ILO 2002 Resolution and Conclusions concerning Decent Work and the Informal Economy
International Labour Conference 90th session 2002

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc90/pdf/pr-25res.pdf>

ILO 2008 Resolution and Conclusions concerning the Promotion of Rural Employment for
Poverty Alleviation International Labour Conference 97th session Geneva 2008

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_094068.pdf

ILO 2008 Resolution and Conclusions on skills development improved productivity, employ-
ment growth and development International Labour Conference 97th session, Geneva 2008

http://www.ilo.org/skills/pubs/WCMS_103457/lang-en/index.htm

ILO 2009 Resolution and Conclusions concerning Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work
International Labour Conference 98th session Geneva 2009

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_113004.pdf

Relevant Publications

Chant, S. Pedwell, C. 2008 Women Gender and the Informal Economy: An assessment of ILO
Research and suggested Ways Forward discussion paper. (ILO Geneva)

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_091228.pdf

Horn, Zoe Elena(2010) 'The effects of the global economic crisis on women in the
informal economy: research findings from WIEGO and the Inclusive Cities partners', Gender
& Development, 18: 2, 263 — 276

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13552074.2010.491339>

International Labour Conference, 90th session 2002. Report VI Decent Work and the Informal
Economy, ILO Geneva

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/relm/ilc/ilc90/pdf/rep-vi.pdf>

International Labour Conference, 98th session 2009 Report VI Gender Equality at the Heart of
Decent Work Report, Geneva ILO

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_norm/@relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_105119.pdf

ILO 2002 Women and Men in the informal economy: A statistical picture (ILO, Geneva)
<http://www.ilo.org/dyn/infoecon/docs/441/F596332090/women%20and%20men%20stat%20picture.pdf>

ILO 2007 Rolling back informality Asian Employment Forum: Growth, Employment and Decent Work background paper Beijing, People's Republic of China 13-15 August 2007
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/asiaforum/download/report.pdf>

ILO 2007 The Informal Economy: Enabling Transition to Formality, background paper for the Tripartite Interregional symposium on the Informal Economy, Geneva 27-29 November 2007 (ILO Geneva)
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_protect/---protrav/---safework/documents/publication/wcms_110324.pdf

ILO 2009 The informal economy in Africa: Promoting Transition to formality: Challenges and Strategies (ILO, Geneva)
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/@emp_policy/documents/publication/wcms_127814.pdf

ILO 2011, Global Employment Trends 2011: The challenge of a jobs recovery, Geneva, ILO.
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/@publ/documents/publication/wcms_150440.pdf

UNIFEM 2005 Progress of the World's Women 2005: Women work and poverty (UNIFEM New York 2005)
http://www.unifem.org/attachments/products/PoWW2005_eng.pdf

Tools

Chen, M., Vanek, M., Carr, M., Mains 2004 Mainstreaming informal employment and gender in poverty reduction: A handbook for policy makers and other stakeholders (Commonwealth Secretariat, IDRC)
http://www.idrc.ca/en/ev-66028-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

ILO 2000 Modular Package on Gender Poverty and Employment (ILO Geneva)
http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/ilo-bookstore/order-online/books/WCMS_PUBL_9221108392_EN/lang--en/index.htm

ILO 2009 Guidelines on Gender in Employment Policies (ILO Geneva)
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/instructionalmaterial/wcms_103611.pdf

ILO 2009, ILO Tools for Women's Entrepreneurship Development
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_117998.pdf

United Nations 2003, Integrating Unpaid Work into National Policies, ESCAP, UNDP, New York, United Nations
http://www.unescap.org/stat/meet/wipuw/1.unpaid_cover&back.pdf

UNIFEM, Youtube, Gender Responsive Budgeting Morocco
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEUEngk8MdE>

WIEGO global research Network (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing)
<http://www.wiego.org/>

For further information see the ILO's Bureau for Gender Equality website <http://www.ilo.org/gender/lang--en/index.htm> and the ILO Conditions of Work and Employment Department <http://www.ilo.org/travail/lang--en/index.htm>

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