

2021 WOMEN 20 SUMMIT

Re-examining the Importance of Quality Jobs for Women

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Manuela Tomei

Director ILO's Department on Conditions of Work and Equality

- ***Why the quality, not just the quantity, of jobs is important for women and gender equality?***

Getting more women into employment means higher growth for countries; a larger pool of talents for enterprises and, for women, greater economic autonomy and say in personal and family decisions. More money into women's pockets also results into higher expenditures in children's health and education.

However, to attract and retain more women in paid work, we need to make sure that jobs are worth their time and talents, and respectful of their dignity. In other words, we need work that is decent.

- ***This is not yet the case. Why?***

One important reason is that women, regardless of their studies, family status or aspirations, continue to be treated as secondary earners, since caregiving is seen as their main role. Globally, women perform two-thirds of housework and unpaid care work, which means a trade-off between time devoted to homes and families and availability to engage in paid work.

Hence, it is not surprising that often women choose, or are compelled to opt for fields of studies or work trajectories that are more compatible with their unpaid work shift. Often these jobs involve shorter hours, are more insecure or unpredictable and low-paid. In emerging economies more women than men end up working informally, that is in poor working conditions, higher risk of exposure to violence and harassment, and limited, if any, social protection.

Highly skilled women also face challenges: they are often the least to be considered for a promotion, and earn typically less than their male peers with equal qualifications. We found out that in Europe the larger the share of women in a company's workforce, the lower will be the average wages, controlling for productivity.

Two implications stem from this finding: (i) companies and the world of work, more generally, believe that they do not need to change, and (ii) women are the ones to "to be fixed" to fit the mould. This has the effect of discouraging or making it impossible for many women to remain in paid employment or imagine a future in non-traditional occupations.

It is therefore not surprising that increases in women's employment globally, including in a number of G20 countries, have been modest in the past years. In the face of the disproportionate toll of the pandemic on women's employment and labour incomes, we need unprecedented policy efforts for women to return to work and to work that is decent.

The recent adoption of the Catania's Roadmap "Towards and Beyond the Brisbane Target: more, better and equally paid jobs for women" by the G20 Ministers of Labour is an important step in this direction and the Italian Presidency and Minister Orlando are to be commended for this result. Through the Roadmap, the G20 countries commit to work towards improving women's employment trends and measure progress in respect of key indicators concerning the quality of work, including low pay, part-time and informal employment.

The ILO, as part of the Secretariat of the G20 Employment Working group, is proud to have contributed to it.

- ***What does the ILO recommend?***

Transformative and measurable gender equality is to be at the core of the recovery effort in line with the ILO *Resolution concerning a global call to action for a human-centred recovery from the COVID-19 crisis*. This involves action in five policy areas:

- **Gender-responsive employment policies for an inclusive and job-rich recovery.** This means macroeconomic stimulus packages that boost aggregate demand, with a focus on women's quality employment and incomes; policies that support sectors in which women prevail and active

labour market policies for equitable integration of women in to productive employment, including skilling, re-skilling and upskilling.

- **Investments in the care economy.** To enhance the infrastructure, staffing and working conditions in education, health, social work and domestic work, which are key to people's well-being and economic resilience. The care economy is an important source of jobs, especially for women, and facilitates the reconciliation of paid work and unpaid care work. Maternity, paternity and parental leave, together with well-designed flexible working arrangements, can also facilitate co-responsibility at home.
- **Reduce the gender pay gap by promoting equal pay for work of equal value.** Adequate laws, including pay transparency laws, and enforcement, alongside dialogue and cooperation with and between employers and workers, and their organizations, are essential. Adequate minimum wages can also go a long way in supporting women's economic autonomy, given their concentration in low paid jobs.
- **Eliminate violence and harassment in the world of work.** Gender-based violence at work and at home are two faces of the same coin. The ILO Convention No. 190 provides a useful framework for action to end violence and harassment in the world of work, including mitigating the impact of domestic violence on women's paid work.
- **Working towards universal access to adequate social protection for all to reduce gender gaps in social protection coverage.** Well-designed tax-financed benefits with social insurance can also help promote transitions from the informal to formal economy, and ensuring that girls and boys, women and men, enjoy adequate social protection throughout their lives.

In sum, if G20 countries are to honour their commitment of creating 100 million new jobs for women by 2025, they need to improve the quality of their work and reward it fairly.