

BALI DECLARATION POLICY BRIEF NO. 1 | 2018 UPDATE

CLOSING THE GENDER GAP: ENHANCE OPPORTUNITY, WAGES AND TREATMENT AT WORK FOR WOMEN

BALI DECLARATION PRIORITY:

Closing gender gaps in opportunity and treatment at work through:

- (a) Measures to break down barriers to women's labour force participation and advancement;
- (b) Promotion of equal pay for work of equal value;
- (c) Extended maternity protection measures;
- (d) Measures enabling women and men to balance work and care responsibilities.

The Bali Declaration was adopted at the 16th Asia and Pacific Regional Meeting of the ILO on 9 December 2016. The Declaration serves as a call to action for governments, workers' and employers' organizations in the region to do more to promote inclusive growth, social justice and decent work. This series of Policy Briefs aim to focus attention on the priorities for policies and actions at national level and by the ILO as defined in the Declaration.

Gender equality and women's empowerment have implications for growth and development. Recent ILO estimates suggest that a reduction in the gap in participation rates between men and women by 25 per cent has the potential to increase the GDP in Asia-Pacific by as much as US\$ 3.2 trillion.

Gender equality is not just a human right. It is also an important development objective, proven to contribute to economic growth and poverty reduction. Increasing the labour force participation of women along with measures for ensuring decent work means not only greater production of goods and services but also creates potential for increased income and expenditure at the household level, advances in female empowerment and improved well-being of children which then carries poverty reduction and economic growth forward through the next generations. While women feature in all Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Goal 5 on achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls, and Goal 8 on promoting sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth and decent work for all, are particularly essential to the realization of women's economic rights and achieving inclusive growth with social justice.



As we work towards our next centenary and the transformations in the world of work intensify, a renewed sense of commitment is needed today to ensure that this better future for women – and men – becomes a reality

– Guy Ryder, ILO Director-General

DEFINING THE CHALLENGE

Gender gaps are one of the most pressing challenges facing the world of work. Women are significantly less likely than men to participate in the labour market. At the same time, women workers in Asia and the Pacific are overrepresented in low-skilled and low productivity sectors, unpaid care and domestic work.

At the global level, there have been some improvements in reducing gender gaps in labour force participation. Yet this has been less apparent in Asia. In South Asia less than one in three women was active in the labour market (27.9 per cent) in 2017, resulting in a female participation rate that is 54.1 percentage points below the male (ILO, 2018a). Moreover, this gap has widened over the last decade more than any other region. In Eastern Asia, in contrast, the participation rate for women remained the second highest globally at 57.8 per cent with South-Eastern Asia and the Pacific not far behind at 55.1 per cent.

Female participation in the region runs counter to aspirations in many cases; around 80 per cent of women polled in Eastern Asia and South-Eastern Asia and Pacific stated they would rather be working in a paid job or combining paid work with home duties than staying solely at home (ILO, 2017). Yet the burden of care work continues to fall heavily on women, thus continuing to keep many women tied to the home. ILO

(2018b) found that, globally, women perform 76.2 per cent of total hours of unpaid care work, more than three times as much as men. The distribution of women's share in unpaid work was found to be highest in the Asia-Pacific region.

Gender pay gaps are another stubborn reality in the region even in the sectors where female workers now outnumber male workers. The ILO Global Wage Report 2018/19 explores the issue of gender pay gaps in depth (ILO, 2018h). Regardless of how it is measured, inequalities in the labour market linked to gender remain all too evident in Asia and the Pacific, as elsewhere.

AREAS OF ACTION AND LESSONS LEARNED

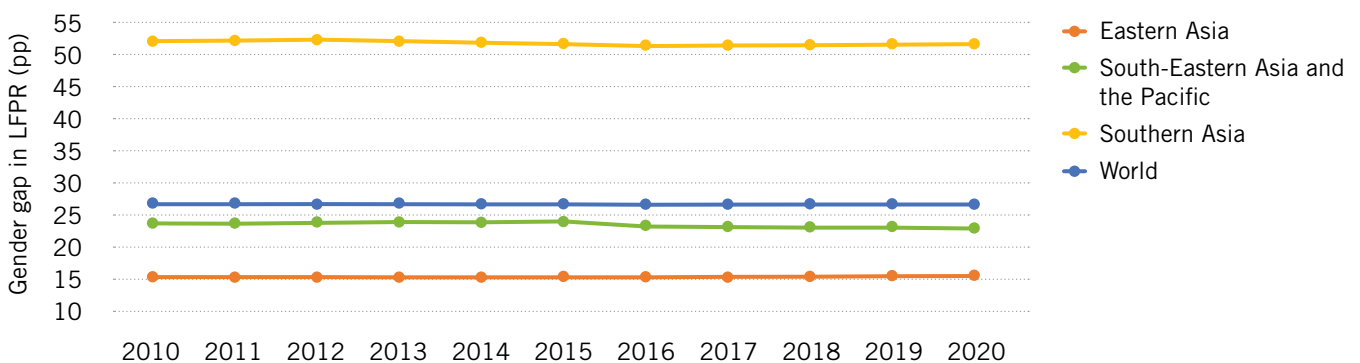
Employment outcomes for women fall short of outcomes for men again and again due to the context-specific combination of economic and social pressures. Nonetheless, the news is not all bad when it comes to progress in promoting gender equality in the world of work.

An ILO Regional Conference on Women and the Future of Work in Asia and the Pacific was held in February 2018, leading to a report on “game changers” to spur a more equal future of work for women in the Asia-Pacific region. The following are some of the resulting action points highlighted in the report (ILO, 2018c):

Transform adverse gender norms and attitudes

A selection of action areas include removing discriminatory laws and regulations through legal and regulatory reforms; implementing time-bound strategies to shape social norms to support gender equality, prevent and end violence and harassment; collecting data and carrying out research on what works on addressing adverse gender norms and attitudes; and supporting women's leadership in decision-making and policy-making processes.

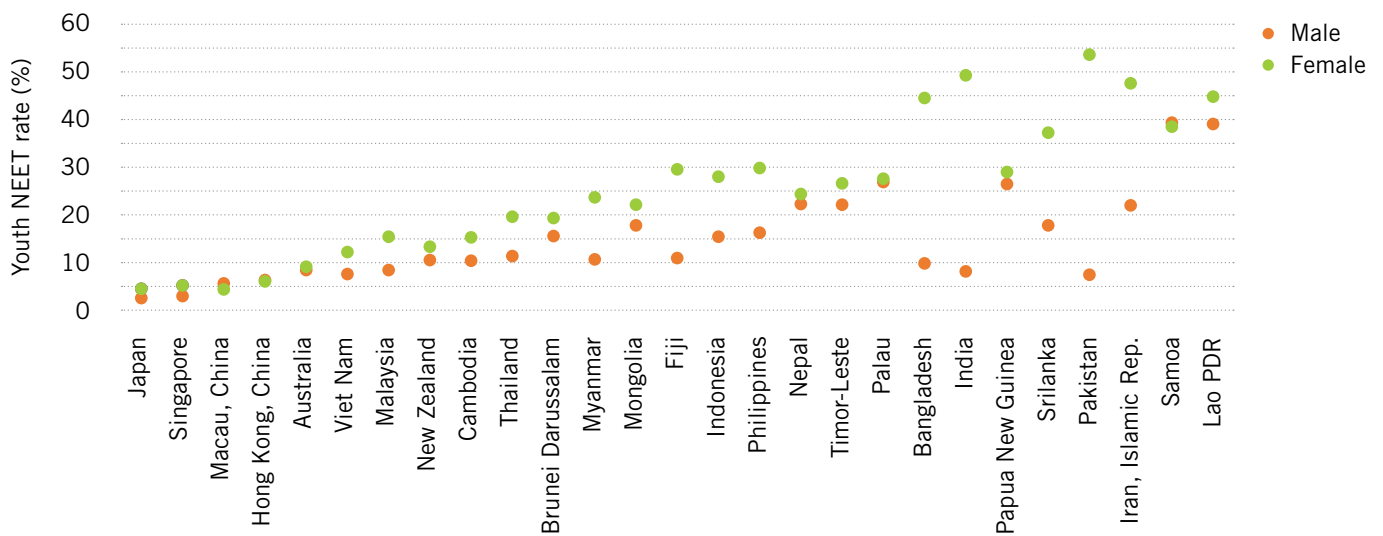
GENDER GAPS IN LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION ARE PROJECTED TO REMAIN STATIC OR EVEN TO INCREASE IN THE ASIAN-PACIFIC REGION



Notes: The gender gap is measured as the difference between the male and female labour force participation rates; pp = percentage point; LFPR = labour force participation rate.

Source: ILO database of labour statistics (ILOSTAT), ILO modeled estimates, May 2018.

EXCLUSION STARTS EARLY: FEMALE NEET RATES EXCEED MALE NEET RATES IN ALL COUNTRIES, LATEST YEARS



Note: NEETs are persons aged 15-24 who are neither in employment, nor education or training. The NEET rate is the share in the youth population.
Source: Based on ILO (2018a).

Amplify women's voice, representation and leadership in the world of work

A selection of action areas include developing targets and action plans to achieve gender parity at all levels in world-of-work organizations and enterprises; supporting the emergence of women leaders in government, employers' organizations and trade unions through dedicated capacity development programmes that include mentoring and networking; and supporting the organization of women workers, cooperatives, entrepreneurs and other relevant associations.

Recognize and redistribute care work

A selection of action areas include investing in social infrastructure that includes universal paid maternity benefits and health care, parental leave; ensuring accessible and affordable public care services; providing decent working conditions in the care sector, including for domestic workers; and developing and supporting family-friendly workplace policies and practices.

Ensure equal opportunities and treatment of women

A selection of action areas include addressing discriminatory gender stereotypes in education curricula; developing active labour market policies that target young women; and eliminating discriminatory recruitment practices, pay gaps and unfair bias by improving legislative frameworks and strengthening enforcement.

Strengthen accountability for progress on gender equality in the world of work

A selection of action areas include collecting and ensuring availability of sex-disaggregated and gender data to track progress on gender equality in the world of work; developing

joint ministerial and tripartite national action plans for gender equality measures; and promoting ratification of key gender equality conventions.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

The ILO will continue to work with governments and social partners in the region to promote gender-responsive and inclusive programming and policy responses.

Selection of recent events and projects

The ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, with support of the Australian Government, hosted the regional conference on "Women and the Future of Work in Asia", 31 January – 1 February 2018.

- During the event, the Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) was launched for the Asia and the Pacific region. EPIC is an initiative driven by stakeholders committed to reduce the gender pay gap and make equal pay for work of equal value a reality across all countries and sectors. It is led by the ILO, UN Women and OECD, and is intended to engage with stakeholders to take concrete steps to accelerate the closing of the gender pay gap and the achievement of pay equity.
- Also during the event, Better Work, a joint initiative of the ILO and the International Finance Corporation, took the opportunity to launch a comprehensive, five-year gender strategy to empower women, reduce sexual harassment and close the gender pay gap in the global garment industry.

A new programme was launched in September 2017 on "Women in STEM Workforce Readiness and Development".

The programme, funded by JPMorgan Chase Foundation and implemented in Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand, seeks to provide women with critical soft and technical STEM-related skills, employability and leadership training coupled with targeted mentorship to help women gain quality employment and advancement opportunities in STEM-related jobs. It will run through December 2020.

In June 2018 at the International Labour Conference, ILO constituents engaged in a discussion on “Violence and harassment in the world of work”, setting the scene for the adoption of a Recommendation and Convention on the topic at the 2019 session of the Conference.

The Safe & Fair: Realizing Women Migrant Workers’ Rights and Opportunities in the ASEAN Region project was launched in January 2018. The joint project of ILO and UN Women is part of the EU-UN Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls in the ASEAN region. It will run through December 2022.

In June 2018, findings of a study on “Women in Leadership and Management in Public Sector Undertakings” was presented in New Delhi. The study was initiated by the Bureau for Employers’ Activities of the ILO in collaboration with Standing Conference of Public Enterprises (SCOPE), an apex body of 201 member organizations representing largely the Central Public Sector Enterprises in India. Following up on the findings of the study, ILO/ACTEMP and SCOPE plans to set up a Network of Women Empowerment and Leadership within SCOPE.

The Labour Migration Policy Project in Sri Lanka, supported by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), seeks to strengthen the institutional capacity of diplomatic missions to deliver services to migrant workers in a gender sensitive manner. The project has so far worked with Sri Lankan missions in Singapore, Kuwait, Jordan and Lebanon

The Better Work project in Bangladesh conducted a series of training to prevent sexual harassment between January 2017 and March 2018. Nearly 400 factory managers and brand representatives were trained.



Work is changing and there is a real risk that the prospects for women will become even more challenging over the coming years. Anticipating these challenges is critical as we won’t achieve our shared goals of poverty reduction and decent work for all if women cannot play an equal role in society and the workplace.

– Tomoko Nishimoto, ILO Assistant Director-General and Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific

Useful references:

International Labour Organization (ILO). 2018a. *Asia-Pacific Employment and Social Outlook 2018: Advancing decent work for sustainable development* (Bangkok).

– 2018b. *Care work and care jobs for the future of decent work* (Geneva).

– 2018c. *Game changers: Women and the future of work in Asia and the Pacific* (Bangkok).

– 2018d. *Women in leadership and management in public sector undertakings in India* (e-doc).

– 2018e. *Women in leadership and management in public sector undertakings in India* (New Delhi, Bureau for Employers’ Activities).

– 2018f. *Sri Lankan female migrant workers and the family background report* (Colombo).

– 2018g. *The Women at Work initiative: The push for equality*, Report of the Director-General I(B), 107th Session of the International Labour Conference, Geneva.

– 2018h. *Global Wage Report 2018/19: What lies behind gender pay gaps* (Geneva).