EMPLOYMENT RESEARCH BRIEF

International Labour Office

GENDER IN EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR MARKET POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES: WHAT WORKS FOR WOMEN?

Gender equality and women's empowerment are part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by the UN in 2015. The SDGs call for action to ensure that economic growth is not only socially and economically sustainable, but also environmentally sustainable. Integrating gender equality principles into various employment promotion strategies and approaches, and giving focus to the role of women in the labour market and society, are fundamental to ensuring that such development goals can be achieved.

The ILO works with developing countries to promote employment, income and decent work opportunities for all women and men, in keeping with the SDGs, but in particular, SDG 5 – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; and SDG 8 – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men. This research brief presents selected examples of gender-responsive (inclusive) employment policies and programmes that underpin ILO's work, as well as examples of good practice from other organizations, recognizing that collaboration and partnerships on a global scale will be required to achieve the SDGs.

The Sustainable Development Goals

The United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on 1 January 2016 which launched the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Applying universally to all countries, these Goals provide the urgent impetus for the global community to end all forms of poverty, hunger, inequality, tackle climate change, and ensure that no one is left behind. With a commitment to protect the planet and promote prosperity for all, the SDGs acknowledge that ending poverty must go hand in hand with strategies that build inclusive economic growth. This vision of inclusive growth also addresses a range of social needs, such as education, health, social protection, and job opportunities, while meeting the pressing challenges of achieving environmental sustainability.

The role of gender equality is crucial to the achievement of SDGs. Just as in the previous development framework of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the empowerment of girls and women is recognized as essential to the ultimate achievement of sustainable development, and is also a goal in itself (SDG 5). Women have a vital role in all the SDGs, with many specific targets recognizing gender equality as both a fundamental right and a driver of progress across all 17 goals (see box 1 below). The 2030 Agenda, therefore, is a major opportunity to make a real difference on gender equality and women's empowerment, as it addresses structural causes of gender inequality and recommends action on issues such as gender-based violence, child marriage, access to resources, leadership opportunities, and the role of women in peace and nation building.

The lynchpins for realizing this transformative vision are: more jobs and decent work for women, universal social protection, and measures to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care and household work. Women's empowerment is also a key component of inclusive growth and creates economic opportunities for all segments of the population, particularly the vulnerable. It also distributes the benefits of growth and prosperity fairly across society. It is therefore an essential part of deepening democracy, and reinforcing the shared social contract which is the basis of democracy – all people must share in progress, both in monetary and non-monetary terms.

Employment Policy Department
Employment and Labour Market Policies Branch

Box 1 17 Sustainable Development Goals to transform our world and create the future we want

The 17 SDGs listed below contain an additional 169 targets and over 300 indicators to review and monitor progress.

1. **No Poverty** – End poverty in all its forms, everywhere.
2. **Zero Hunger** – End hunger and achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. **Good Health and Well-being** – Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
4. **Quality Education** – Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote life-learning opportunities for all.
5. **Gender Equality** – Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. **Clean Water and Sanitation** – Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7. **Affordable and Clean Energy** – Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
8. **Decent Work and Economic Growth** – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all women and men.
9. **Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure** – Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
10. **Reduced Inequalities** – Reduce income inequalities within and among countries.
11. **Sustainable Cities and Communities** – Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
12. **Responsible Consumption and Production** – Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13. **Climate Action** – Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts by regulating emissions and promoting developments in renewable energy.
13. **Life Below Water** – Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
14. **Life on Land** – Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and biodiversity loss.
15. **Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions** – Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
16. **Partnerships for the Goals** – Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development.

Source: UN website on Sustainable Development Goals, available at: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs.

An unequal labour market

While some progress has been made in moving forward on gender equality in the world of work, it has been slower than needed. Even in the second decade of the twenty-first century, women lag far behind men in the labour market, due to a number of factors, including: discriminatory social norms, more limited access to productive resources such as credit; lower average education than men; the heavier share of unpaid care work, and work–family balance issues. Despite the fact that in some contexts young women have surpassed the educational achievements of young men, this has not yet translated into better outcomes in the labour market. In more traditional societies, conformity to gender roles ascribed by the society to women and men also plays a major role in constraining decent work opportunities for women.

Recent data confirms these findings:

- In 2017, the global labour force participation rate for women (at just over 49 per cent) is nearly 27 percentage points lower than the rate for men, and is unlikely to change substantially in the future (ILO, 2017).
- When they do participate in the labour market women are more likely to be unemployed than men. Globally, the unemployment rate for women stands at 6.2 per cent in 2017, representing a gap of 0.7 percentage points from the male unemployment rate of 5.5 per cent (ibid.).
- The share of wage and salaried employment for women increases as countries develop. In developed countries, the rate is higher for women at 89.1 per cent (men at 83.7 per cent), demonstrating that men tend to be more self-employed. However, in developing countries only 13.6 per cent of employed women are in this category, as compared to 24.3 per cent for men (ibid.).
- Among employed women worldwide, nearly 15 per cent are contributing family workers compared to over 5 per cent among men. In developing countries where nearly 36.6 per cent of women and only 17.2 per cent of men are employed as contributing family workers, the gap is widest at 19 percentage points (ibid.).
- A particularly pernicious area of discrimination is the gender wage gap which prevails in all countries, regardless of income status. According to the ILO (2016), women earn 77 per cent of men's wages. This wage gap cannot be explained solely by difference in education or age, but is linked to the undervaluation of women's work, the skills required in female-dominated sectors or occupations, discrimination, and the need of women to take career breaks or reduce hours in paid work to attend to care responsibilities. It is estimated that if current trends prevail, it will take 70 years to close the gender wage gap completely (ILO, 2016).
- Equally difficult to dislodge is horizontal and vertical labour market segregation. Horizontal segregation occurs when women are over-represented in a narrower range of jobs and sectors than men, and often in the more poorly paid sectors. Vertical segregation is triggered when women are concentrated in lower-ranking positions with little or no opportunities for promotion into positions of authority and management to gain higher salaries (ibid.).
- Women also face the brunt of environmental degradation especially in poor communities. As land, forest and water resources once held in common are increasingly enclosed, privatized or taken for commercial investment, local communities and indigenous peoples, particularly the women who rely on them, become marginalized and displaced. The environmental costs of production such as pollution, toxic waste and greenhouse gas emissions are externalized. Poor women often bear the burden of coping with climate-related shocks and stresses and the health effects of air and urban pollution, which add to their existing care burdens.[1]
- Women and girls do most of the unpaid care work around the world, irrespective of the income level of the country. The situation is most problematic in poor developing countries with weak infrastructure and limited access to basic utilities, resources and public services. Working hours for women in these countries can be far longer than for men, if unpaid and paid work are combined, leading to time poverty (World Bank, 2006). It is, however, also apparent in developed and middle-income countries where women are more likely to switch to part-time work, or exit the paid labour market once they have children, thus putting themselves at considerable economic risk. This also implies foregone dividends for the wider economy (OECD, 2014).

Inequality across the life cycle

Women's disadvantages often start from the earliest stages of life, constraining their future choices and opportunities.

- While there has been remarkable progress in achieving gender parity between girls and boys in primary education, there is still a gap in terms of secondary school enrolments of girls, particularly in the Arab States, South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. About 62 million adolescent girls around the world are not in school today. Missing out on secondary schooling is particularly detrimental for the long-term prospects of these children, because economies across the world place a premium on the skills developed at the secondary school level, meaning that girls are at risk of falling even further behind (UNFPA, 2016). Failure to invest effectively in girls may have significant effects on economic growth, potentially holding back the progress of countries for years, if not generations.
- Young women and girls face other profound constraints that affect their life chances of finding decent work. Every day, an estimated 47,700 girls are married at age 17 or younger in developing countries. When a girl is married she is likely to be taken out of school, and as soon as she goes through puberty, she may be expected to begin bearing children. Early pregnancy is another serious hazard which can make her vulnerable to health, education and economic risks, not to mention social exclusion. Without an education or autonomy, she may spend the rest of her life in poverty.[2]
- Girls are also less likely to take subjects involving science, engineering, and math that would place them on equal footing with boys for in-demand jobs. Throughout the world they are also less likely to access the skills which can give them a chance to gain decent work opportunities. Where vocational training is undertaken, it is "gendered", for example, with girls being trained in tailoring and boys in skills that have a market demand. Girls are much less aware than boys of these market-oriented options and less likely to express interest in them (ibid.).
- Pension coverage is lower for women than men – at a global level it accounts for an average gender difference of 10.6 percentage points lower. Globally, women also represent nearly 65 per cent of people above the retirement age without any regular pension. This means that some 200 million women in old age are living without any regular income from an old age or survivor's pension compared to 115 million men (UNFPA, 2016; ILO, 2016).

The transformative potential of economically empowered women

Over recent decades, overwhelming evidence has accumulated that women are one of the most critical development actors. Empowering women and girls has multiplier effects in addressing all the different dimensions of poverty, including reduced fertility, better health and nutritional status of children, stronger decision-making power in households, the greater likelihood of labour market participation, and increases in household and national income.

In 2014, the Group of Twenty (G20) leaders made a commitment to reduce the gap in labour participation rates between men and women by 25 per cent by the year 2025. The ILO estimates that if this goal was realized at the global level, it has the potential to add US$5.8 trillion dollars to the global economy. This could also unlock large potential tax revenues. For example, global tax revenue could increase by US$1.5 trillion, most of it in emerging (US$990 billion) and developed economies (US$530 billion) (ILO, 2017).

The ILO and equality in the world of work

Since the ILO's foundation in 1919, gender equality has been at the heart of making the labour market fairer and more equal. Over the years the ILO has developed a full range of international labour standards to promote gender equality in the world of work and employment, including those in box 2.

Box 2 - ILO normative frameworks supporting gender equality and employment

While all ILO norms are applicable in supporting women's economic empowerment, there are some which address the issue more explicitly and provide detailed guidance in supporting their implementation.

Discrimination

The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111) is the reference point for the fundamental right of non-discrimination at work and is the most comprehensive instrument on the subject. The prohibited grounds for discrimination cover sex, race, colour, religion, political opinion, national extraction and social origin. Sex discrimination includes discrimination on the grounds of maternity and family responsibilities, as well as sexual harassment (of both women and men). The Convention allows for other grounds of discrimination to be added to the prohibited list, in consultation with workers' and employers' organizations. Some ratifying member States, for example, have included issues highly relevant to gender equality such as age, HIV and AIDs status and sexual orientation.

Equal pay

The Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100) specifically addresses equal remuneration between men and women for work of equal value. Contrary to common perceptions, women's educational qualifications and intermittent labour market participation are not the main reasons for the gender pay gap, but rather are the result of structural sex discrimination. Contributing factors such as the persistence of gender stereotypes, occupational segregation, pay structures, and women's access to effective collective bargaining, result in pay inequalities based on gender.

The concept of "work of equal value" goes beyond "same" or "similar" and encompasses comparison of work of a completely different nature, but nevertheless of equal value. It can therefore counter the undervaluing of "female jobs", and is an important tool in combating occupational segregation.

Family responsibilities

The Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156) and the accompanying Recommendation, 1981 (No. 165) recognize the need to reconcile work and family responsibilities. With the aim of creating equality of opportunity and treatment for men and women workers, these instruments set out guidance on the myriad of issues that affect workers with dependents, such as childcare, commuting distances, part-time work, and working hours, among other issues.

Maternity protection

Given the importance of maternity protection, the ILO has adopted three Conventions on maternity protection: the Maternity Protection Convention, 1919 (No. 3); the Maternity Protection Convention (Revised), 1952 (No. 103); and the Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183). Together with their corresponding Recommendations these Conventions have progressively expanded the scope and entitlement of maternity protection at work, and provide guidance on orienting national policy and action. The core concerns aim to enable women to combine their reproductive and productive roles successfully, and prevent unequal treatment in obtaining and keeping jobs because of their maternity responsibilities. According to Convention No. 183, women who are absent from work on maternity leave shall be entitled to a cash benefit which ensures that they can maintain themselves and their child in proper conditions of health and with a suitable standard of living.

Full and productive employment

The Employment Policy Convention, 1964 (No. 122) recognizes the importance of full, productive and freely chosen employment and creates an obligation among ratifying member States to develop a national employment policy as a major goal within the national agenda. It states that "the said policy shall aim at ensuring that ... there is freedom of choice of employment and the fullest possible opportunity for each worker to qualify for, and to use his (her)* skills and endowments in, a job for which he (she) is well suited, irrespective of race, colour, sex, religion, political opinion, national extraction or social origin" (Article 1 (2.c).

**Parentheses inserted by author.*
Source: ILO web site on Conventions and Recommendations, http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=1000:12000:::NO::: (accessed 20 Jan. 2017).

As part of the preparations for the ILO's 100th anniversary, it has launched the Women at Work Initiative to highlight the key challenges still facing women in the labour market. The Initiative questions why progress on delivering on decent work for women has been so slow. Issues that are regularly identified as obstacles are: (i) stereotypes, discrimination, and access to work; (ii) absence of equal pay; (iii) unequal distribution and undervaluation of care work; and (iv) combating violence at work.

The ILO support to national efforts to promote productive and freely chosen employment and decent work for both women and men, includes policy advice on women's empowerment, as well as disseminating good practices on what works for women in the labour market.

Pro-poor growth and National Employment Policies

Formulating and implementing gender-sensitive, pro-poor growth strategies is important. These strategies promote policy measures for employment creation, investment in job creating sectors, diversifying the economy, and for creating better access to basic services such as health, education, safe water and sanitation for poor households. In addition, job creation policies need to generate a socio-economic environment that can enable the working poor to enhance their productivity (or remuneration), and move to more value-added and productive sectors and occupations. Ensuring equal access to productive resources such as credit, land, technology, and markets for poor women and the marginalized is also essential; so, too, is support to small and medium-sized enterprises and upgrading workers' skills training. Targeted expenditures, subsidies, pricing mechanisms, and an appropriate regulatory environment in the labour market – with proper legal enforcement – are all parts of the tool kit to support pro-poor growth.

Such strategies also need to recognize and give value to care work, and develop policy responses that will alleviate unpaid care burdens and support its equitable redistribution. Moreover, it needs to remove structural barriers to women's labour market participation, such as discriminatory laws on inheritance, and access to land, property, credit, and bank accounts, among others.

One of the most important means of establishing the priority of employment within a country's development framework is through the establishment of National Employment Policies (NEPs). These can make explicit the centrality of job creation in a growth trajectory, rather than as a mere residual off-shoot of growth. Only by placing inclusive employment measures at the heart of economic policies is there a realistic chance to move out of poverty, advance gender equality, and generate job-rich growth and prosperity for all. NEPs can also ensure that alternative growth models which recognize the importance of environmental sustainability and mitigating climate change are prioritized for investment through green jobs components. Through policy coherence in the overall national development frameworks, these measures can powerfully reinforce each other.

The process of developing NEPs can also be a vehicle for improved social dialogue, deepening democracy, because the process requires active tripartite participation of representatives of workers' and employers' groups in dialogue with the government. Together, the social partners can develop common employment goals and priorities, involving other groups and Ministries, including the gender ministry and women's organizations, to further embed gender-sensitivity in the policies adopted. NEPs also offer an opportunity to make an explicit commitment to help address the various intersectional inequalities (such as colour, ethnicity, social class, etc.) that shape women's knowledge, chances and capabilities in the labour market.

An ILO evaluation of NEPs from 24 countries found a rich range of measures to explicitly support women's economic empowerment from a range of low- and middle-income countries (Goulding, 2013). Among these measures are strategies for:[3]

- Supporting sectors in which women are concentrated
- Explicitly encouraging female entrepreneurship
- Opening access to productive resources for women's enterprises
- Developing incentives and support to formalize enterprises
- Matching supply and demand for skills in the labour market
- Strengthening gender awareness of public employment services (PESs)
- Strengthening anti-discrimination provisions, such as addressing the gender wage gap and affirmative action hiring practices
- Supporting women's productive and reproductive responsibilities through infrastructure development

- Measures for balancing work–family responsibilities
- Valuing care work, and supporting national measures to reduce unpaid care work

Active labour market policies

Active labour market policies (ALMPs) are a set of policies that the government can adopt and implement in order to facilitate those who are unemployed and underemployed to find a job. ALMPs are particularly valuable for women – enabling young women to gain essential skills and work experience, as well as providing guidance in non-traditional work opportunities; and for adult women facilitating their re-entry into the labour market after breaks resulting from childbirth and child-rearing.

Bergemann and van der Berg (2008) have found in a study of selected European countries that ALMPs have even greater positive effects on women's employment than on men's, particularly in contexts where women's labour force participation is low. Their evidence suggests that these results are strongest for skills-training programmes, though measures such as job search assistance, hiring subsidies and start-up grants, also have a high impact on women's employment. In countries with high labour force participation rates for women, job creation programmes are very effective in enabling women to exit unemployment.

An ILO project in Turkey has helped to strengthen the capacity of PESs to support women's employment.[4] The project, *Active labour market policies for advancing gender equality through decent employment for women in Turkey*, is building the capacity of ISKUR (the Turkish Public Employment Service) to develop gender-sensitive services, and increase the employability of women jobseekers through vocational training. It also established strong linkages between the social partners and the employment services, as well as with local vocational training boards, and strengthened their technical capacity on women's employment issues.

In Chile, specific programmes within PESs were also developed. Recognizing that poorer women need a more intensive package of support to participate in ALMPS, individualized assistance was provided to vulnerable women under the *Mejor Trabajo and Mujeres Jefes de Hogar* project to facilitate the transition from short-term emergency employment to self-employment (World Bank, 2012).

Employment-intensive public works

Public works have achieved many gender equality successes and they are contributing to the transformation of the dynamics that determine status, power and entitlements. Among the notable elements required to enable women to engage in these programmes are the setting of wage levels with equal remuneration for work of equal value, providing child care and transportation, as well as targeting women and setting quotas.

It is also important that infrastructure programmes maximize access to roads, telecommunications, energy and water for poor communities. Assets that help women to carry out everyday chores more efficiently, such as the supply of piped water and electricity, can free up time for educational opportunities, productive paid work and participation in community life and local governance. Improving infrastructure such as rural roads and transportation services increases women's mobility, as well as productivity and income by easing access to markets. Gender-responsive asset creation brings important dividends in the form of increased productive work for women, which subsequently increases their incomes, improving their access to social and health services (Tanzarn, N. and Gutierrez, M., 2015).

In Cameroon, the Ngaoundere-Garoua Boulai road programme engaged women actively in decision-making on the design of this comprehensive programme. The result was the creation of a range of community assets supportive of their productive and reproductive work. These included construction of feeder roads to reduce women's workload; creation of market facilities; recruitment of women in all phases of road development (including equal pay concepts); programmes to modernize agriculture; access facilities for marketing agricultural products; and improvement of healthcare facilities (OECD, 2012).

Access to employable skills

Women are often one of the most affected groups when it comes to the mismatch between the supply of skills and labour market demand. Training for women is often supply-driven, usually in female dominated sectors where market saturation and low incomes are a major problem. Thus, skills training has the potential to reinforce occupational segregation.

Conversely demand-driven skills training can enable women to reach a wider range of jobs and occupations and even penetrate into traditionally male-dominated spheres where incomes and the status of the work are higher. Where cultural norms are restrictive, it is essential that such training in non-traditional skills be accompanied by intensive sensitization of local communities and employers, to avoid women being marginalized in their new occupations or unable to find customers and employers.

In the ILO-supported *Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)* project in Bangladesh, substantial reforms were undertaken to ensure that there were stronger links with the private sector so that vocational training could become more demand-driven. The project also established quotas and targets to increase the numbers of women participating in skills training (Otobe, 2014).[5]

For skills training to be effective in breaking down occupational segregation, it needs to start from the earliest levels of education, including through guiding girls into science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM) curricula, and through providing gender-sensitive guidance counselling in schools. New technologies and the greening of economies are also providing new opportunities for skills development that can enable women to step into new, high-value jobs, as discussed further below.

Skills training is not enough on its own, however, to improve employment outcomes for women. A comprehensive approach should include improved access to productive resources such as credit, market opportunities, land, technology and other assets. The effectiveness would be improved if it also included support for job searches, opportunities for work experience, and mentoring and guidance.

Skills training also needs to include not just technical and vocational skills, but also soft skills (such as communication, team work, and problem solving) which enhance employability in general. Good technical and soft skills have been shown to be very valuable to women's employment outcomes. In the Dominican Republic, a youth employment programme, *Juventud y Empleo*, targeted young women with more than just technical skills, and found that the soft skills component significantly enhanced their employment prospects.[6]

A skills training programme for women will only be effective if it is designed to take into account women's care responsibilities and can provide flexible pedagogies. Flexible scheduling for the hours of training, providing transport or grants/subsidies; including additional basic skills where necessary (such as literacy and numeracy training), have all proven to be valuable in increasing women's participation in training. Setting targets and quotas for gender balance also have positive effects on participation, as well as gender sensitization of training staff and management, including reviews of curricula to remove gender bias and stereotypes.

For women in the informal economy, in particular, it may be appropriate to build the capacity of informal skills training providers to reach vulnerable women who would be less likely to participate in formal skills training opportunities. Capacity building of informal skills trainers should include supporting standardization, quality control and certification. These are measures which enable women to gain relevant practical skills recognized by employers and contractors. Apprenticeships, both formal and informal, can open up opportunities for women, even in those sectors traditionally dominated by men or strongly linked to occupational segregation. Setting targets, quotas and providing financial incentives to both trainers and women can help break down barriers to participation.

Similarly, in rural communities where the reach of formal skills training institutions is limited, community-based training programmes have been developed such as the ILO's *Training for Rural Economic Empowerment (TREE)* programme.[7] The methodology provides demand-driven skills training through assessment of labour market demand in the local community. It links skills training to business development services and microfinance, and provides mentoring support and guidance. In Pakistan for example, the TREE programme conducted value chain analysis of products to find entry points for women to gain a foothold in higher echelons of the chain. This was accompanied by vocational training in which transportation was provided to overcome mobility barriers, and soft skills training, such as teamwork, negotiation and conflict resolution. Links were made with local employers who provided temporary job placements for participants to gain valuable work experience. The success of the project relied heavily on the participation of employers during the design stage, as well as extensive awareness raising on the business case for recruiting women (ILO, 2014).

Linking skills development with employer needs is particularly important and can help with job placement after training. In Liberia, for example, a World Bank economic empowerment initiative targeting adolescent girls assessed

labour market needs of prospective employers first. As a result, young women found work in catering, painting, driving and professional cleaning. An evaluation found that participants experienced a 50 per cent increase in employment and a 115 per cent increase in incomes.[8]

Green opportunities

There is mounting evidence of the positive benefits of a "green transformation" on the labour market, but these are to a large extent determined by coherent and coordinated national policies, levels of investments and incentives, and overcoming the numerous risks, challenges and dislocations associated with structural change. The management of these risks is critical to avoid marginalization and the loss of existing jobs. Shifts in employment patterns will occur as green transformation unfolds – away from highly polluting, energy inefficient activities into sectors that are cleaner and more energy efficient. Opportunities need to be opened as enterprises embark on the green transformation so that women can engage in skills training for emerging greener jobs. There will not be an automatic transfer from the "brown" (polluting and energy inefficient) to the "green" jobs.

Active labour market policies with preferential treatment and targeted assistance for women, including short-term training opportunities, work experience, employment guarantee programmes, job search support and appropriate skills enhancement, are important mechanisms to enable them to move from declining sectors and jobs into emerging green jobs.

Green jobs encompass the renewable energy sector, waste management and recycling, among other areas. The employment growth potential is high. Already up to 20 million people work as waste pickers around the world, many of them women, though the conditions of work are often informal and the income is poor. Initiatives such as the Waste Collectors' Union in Pune India (KKPKP), however, show that it is possible to create a socially and ecologically sensitive model of waste recovery. The initiative has secured employment for 9,500 waste collectors, of whom 90 per cent are women.[9]

Brazil has the world´s largest national waste-pickers´ movement. The income of its estimated 60,000 members is three to five times higher than that of unorganized waste pickers. This is the result of an effective mix of policies put in place by the Brazilian government over the past decade. Policies include legal recognition, entrepreneurial development, municipal government contracts and facilities (sorting stations), modern recycling methods, skills development and occupational health and safety measures, as well as strategies to prevent child labour. These measures have triggered large-scale improvements in recycling efficiency, working conditions and incomes. There are plans to scale these interventions to formalize a further 250,000 waste pickers (ILO, 2013).

The Grameen Shakti (GS) Microcredit Initiative in Bangladesh is a good example of women's participation in greening the energy sector. The programme has helped to install more than 100,000 solar home systems in rural communities and has trained over 5,000 women as solar photovoltaic (PV) technicians and maintenance workers. This has empowered women to set up their own energy enterprises. They are equipped with knowledge that allows them to take care of their energy systems, which increases their access to clean energy (providing health benefits), as well as freeing up time to engage in other productive work (ILO, 2015).

Entrepreneurship development and social finance

Micro-, small- and medium-sized enterprises are one of the most important sources of employment growth, particularly in developing countries. Entrepreneurship can be a powerful source of women's economic independence and a way out of poverty, but this is contingent on sufficient support and access to resources that can promote business growth to forge a path out of informality.

In Tanzania, a project is taking advantage of the fact that 80 per cent of the micro-entrepreneurs in the country are women, though they lack essential support. The *Virtual Business Incubator for Women project* is developing an incubator without walls (without physical premises), which provides a range of customized resources and services to linked enterprises. This model lowers costs and has increased flexibility of access to clients and markets.[10]

In Algeria, the *Network of Women in the Green Economy (AFEV)* was set up in 2012. It brings together women in senior positions in the environmental sector, in both state and private sector organizations, as well as female entrepreneurs who have established green enterprises. The network builds capacity of its members and encourages women and young adults to set up new green enterprises,

while building partnerships with public institutions to promote start-ups and support incubators. Senior women act as mentors to younger women, and the programme takes advantage of the fact that the new green economy offers new occupations and skills which have not been rigidly constrained by gender norms.[11]

It is not only in developing and emerging economies that women need business development support. Women entrepreneurs in high-income countries also benefit from a wide range of interventions designed for their specific needs. In Ireland, the Chamber of Commerce is coordinating a female entrepreneurs' mentoring network to link women with highly influential business networks at the national and European levels. The Chamber of Commerce provides a range of services that target new start-ups which would otherwise be prone to failure. Mentoring activities include intensive counselling for a year, with one mentor assigned to not more than two mentees.[12]

Social Finance is a key aspect of decent work and helps overcome market failures which are rife in the financial sector. It opens up opportunities for participation in the economy, fosters solidarity, empowers the working poor, and enables vulnerable communities to manage risks. It includes credit services for income generation and starting or expanding micro-enterprises. It can also involve provision of emergency loans, remittance, transfers, guarantees, payment services, insurance, and savings options. All these products and services help poor communities manage risks, stabilize income and reduce vulnerabilities.

Women form a large proportion of those accessing social finance, not only because their access to formal finance is limited, but also for a range of other reasons. This is due, in part, to the fact that women are "change agents" in families who spend a greater proportion of their time and income on family welfare, and because they are often more reliable borrowers. Social finance groups also have experience empowering women to engage in the public sphere, even where their mobility may be restricted by cultural norms, and offer the additional benefit of being able to assist with other social issues, such as domestic violence and spousal alcohol abuse.

Different financial products cater to the diverse needs among the poor, e.g. loans, insurance or savings options. In Bangladesh, for example, as part of the ILO supported *Women's Empowerment through Employment and Health* project, a specific microinsurance product for healthcare was developed, catering to the needs of tens of thousands of very poor women and their families.[13] In Guatemala, the ILO microinsurance innovation facility supported the *Aseguradora Rural* project to develop microinsurance health products that integrate with savings and credit programmes (Otobe, 2014).

New technologies, the Internet and social media are boosting the effectiveness of microfinance. In Kenya, research by Suri and Jack (2016), for example, has shown that access to mobile money via an M-Pesa account (which simplifies the ability to send and receive money) has enabled an estimated 186,000 families to move out of poverty. Researchers surveyed up to 3,000 Kenyan households over six years and compared how households that saw an increase in the density of M-Pesa agents fared versus those without easy access to mobile money.[14] As women shifted from subsistence agriculture to businesses, the impact on female-headed households was more than twice the average measured.

Valuing unpaid care work

Unpaid care work is often treated by policy makers as an unlimited private resource and rarely given economic or monetary value or policy attention. Nonetheless, its contribution to the economy is considerable. It has been estimated that if unpaid care work were given a monetary value it would account for 10 per cent to 39 per cent of GDP (UNRISID, 2010). Another estimate places it at US$10 trillion per year – around 13 per cent of global GDP (Woetzel et al., 2015).

If women are to be fully economically empowered, unpaid care needs to be made visible through statistics and calculations. This is the first step in developing policies and allocating resources which can reduce its drudgery through appropriate investments in infrastructure and social services. Efforts also need to be made to redistribute the burdens of unpaid care work more fairly between men and women. Time-use surveys, gender budgeting and policy development are gaining ground around the world to support this.

Social protection and balancing work–family responsibilities

Social protection measures are vital for enhancing women's economic empowerment and labour market participation. They can be a major means of mitigating women's vulnerabilities, given their high risk of poverty, labour market discrimination, more limited access to education and healthcare, as well as their heavier burden of unpaid care work.

All social protection programmes need to fully integrate gender perspectives, and where additional gender-targeted measures are developed, they need to be carefully designed to avoid adverse effects. The impact of Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs) is mixed, for example. CCTs can have profound impacts on poverty alleviation and ensuring children (especially girls) attend school and have improved health outcomes. However, they can also inadvertently reinforce the gender division of labour in which women are primarily responsible for the care of children. In some countries they have been shown to also increase the time poverty of women (e.g. when women are required to meet the criteria for eligibility). However, when CCTs are combined with a comprehensive set of other support options for women's economic empowerment their impact is substantial (ILO, 2017).

The Brazilian *Bolsa Familia* programme, in particular, has been shown to enhance women's engagement in employment through its comprehensive approach to poverty alleviation. Evaluations have shown that women receiving payments through *Bolsa Familia* have a 16 per cent higher labour force participation rate than women who do not receive the payments, and 8 per cent lower probability of leaving jobs (Veras Soares, Perez Ribas and Guerreiro Osório, 2007). This is also due to the provision of pre-school and day-care facilities and other measures that reduce the time burdens for women (Thakur, Arnold, and Johnson, 2009).

In South Africa, evidence also shows that the child support grant has improved the labour market participation rate of women. It encouraged women to engage in job search and employment by overcoming household cash liquidity constraints (OECD, 2012).

Maternity protection

Nearly all countries have adopted legislation on maternity protection at work. Recent ILO data on 185 countries and territories show that 34 per cent fully meet the requirements of ILO Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183) and Recommendation, 2000 (No. 191) on three key aspects: provision of at least 14 weeks of leave; replacement income at a rate of at least two-thirds of previous earnings while on leave; and funding by social insurance or public funds (Addati, Cassirer and Gilchrist, 2014).

ILO research has shown that maternity schemes based on employer liability can work against the interests of women. By placing the financial burden on employers, they then become reluctant to hire, retain, or promote women based on their maternal responsibilities. In many cases this results in a hiring reduction for women of child-bearing age. Schemes based on social security, however, are much more likely to foster positive results in the hiring of women workers (ibid.).

Brazil has shown that it is not only those in wage and salary work who can enjoy their rights to maternity protection. In 2010 the country enabled self-employed micro-entrepreneurs to register and access paid health care and paid maternity leave through a single social security contribution, thus formalizing an estimated 3 million workers (ibid.). In France, maternity leave is available to the self-employed in the form of a daily allowance for business interruption and a lump sum for maternity leave. In total, women are required to take at least 44 days off from running their enterprise during the maternity period.[15]

The good practice examples in this technical note present just a fraction of experiences from around the world where countries have been making great strides in promoting employment and the economic empowerment of women. These policy innovations can enable countries to meet their commitments to the 2030 Agenda and intensify their efforts to integrate gender issues in employment and labour market policies. While the global community continues in its efforts to achieve the SDGs, these pro-poor and inclusive development strategies will make a real impact on women's lives, both as agents of change and beneficiaries.

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Selected ILO tools and resources for promoting gender equality in employment

What works for women: A gender review of employment policies and programmes to support women's economic empowerment (Forthcoming)

World employment and social outlook trends for women 2017
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_541211.pdf

Illustrated guidelines for gender-responsive Employment Intensive Investment Programmes (2016)
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_policy/---invest/documents/publication/wcms_459976.pdf

Young and female: A double strike? Gender analysis of school-to-work transitions in 32 developing countries (2016)
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_447495.pdf

Gender equality and green jobs, Policy Brief (2015)
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/---emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_360572.pdf

Women and the future of work: Beijing +20 and beyond (2015)
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/@dgreports/@dcomm/documents/briefingnote/wcms_348087.pdf

Maternity and paternity at work: Law and practice across the world: An overview (2014)
http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_242615.pdf

The gender divide in skills development: Progress, challenges and policy options for empowering women (2014)
http://www.ilo.org/skills/pubs/WCMS_244380/lang--en/index.htm

*Resource guide on gender issues in employment and labour market policies (*2014)
http://www.ilo.org/employment/Whatwedo/Instructionmaterials/WCMS_243015/lang--en/index.htm

Guidelines on gender in employment policies: An information resource book (2009)
http://www.ilo.org/employment/Whatwedo/Instructionmaterials/WCMS_103611/lang--en/index.htm

Endnotes

1 See the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) web site for an overview of linkages between gender and climate change, http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/womens-empowerment/gender-and-climate-change.html (accessed 13 Mar. 2017).

2 Dropping out of school is, of course, not just a problem for girls. In some countries, boys are also leaving school early, resulting in a reverse gender gap and setting them on a course of a life-time trajectory of poor quality, informal work.

3 These example measures are discussed in more detail in ILO: What works for women: A gender review of employment policies and programmes to support women's economic empowerment (Geneva), Forthcoming.

4 For more details of ILO's Turkey project, see http://www.ilo.org/ankara/projects/WCMS_414225/lang--en/index.htm (accessed 7 May 2017).

5 For details on the TVET project in Bangladesh, see http://www.ilo.org/dhaka/Whatwedo/Projects/WCMS_106485/lang--en/index.htm (accessed 10 Feb. 2017).

6 For more details on the Dominican Republic project, see http://www19.iadb.org/intal/intalcdi/PE/2012/10685.pdf (accessed 11 Jun. 2017).

7 For more details on the TREE project, see http://www.ilo.org/skills/projects/WCMS_103528/lang--en/index.htm (accessed 10 Feb. 2017).

8 For more details on the World Bank Adolescent Girls' Initiative, see http://www.worldbank.org/en/results/2016/05/09/learn-work-thrive-adolescent-girls-initiative-pilots-help-young-women-transition-to-productive-employment (accessed 10 Feb. 2017).

9 For details of the "Green Economy Coalition", see http://www.greeneconomycoalition.org/search/node/india%20waste (accessed 12 June 2017).

10 For more details on the World Bank project, see Women's Business Incubators: Innovation and results http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTGENDER/Resources/RBI_briefs.pdf (accessed 10 Feb. 2017).

11 For more information on the AFEV project see http://www.enterprise-development.org/wp-content/uploads/giz2016-womens-economic-empowerment-good-practices-in-private-sector-development.pdf (accessed 7 Mar. 2017).

12 For more details on the Irish mentoring network, see the European Institute for Gender Equality web site, http://eige.europa.eu/sites/default/files/documents/mentoring_clinics_ireland.pdf (accessed 10 Feb. 2017).

13 For more information on the Bangladesh empowerment project, see http://www.ilo.org/declaration/follow-up/tcprojects/eliminationofdiscrimination/WCMS_164818/lang--en/index.htm (accessed 10 Apr. 2017).

14 As cited by The Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) web site, http://www.cgap.org/blog/why-does-m-pesa-lift-kenyans-out-poverty (accessed 10 Feb. 2017).

15 For information on France's social security scheme for self-employed workers, see http://www.cleiss.fr/docs/regimes/regime_france_independants_en.html (accessed 14 May. 2017).

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