

WOMEN AND THE ECONOMY: NEW CHALLENGES



**BEIJING AT 10 :
PUTTING POLICY INTO PRACTICE**

Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

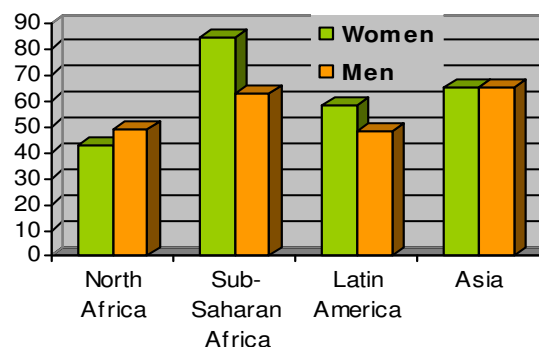


Critical Area F. Women and the Economy

Women are an increasingly large proportion of the global workforce, though their participation varies significantly from country to country. Simple statistics on participation however obscure major differences between men and women's labour force participation. The different types of work that women and men perform give them access to different levels of income, job security, benefits such health or employment insurance, collective bargaining and job training or other education activities. Unfortunately, throughout the world women have less access to all of the above because they have less access to formal, regulated, and paid employment within the traditional labour market. Instead, women are the majority among workers in the informal economy, part-time jobs, export-processing industries, domestic service, the sex sector, and the lower levels of most traditional sectors such as health and education; as well as the overwhelming majority of unpaid workers in the reproductive or care economy.

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), over 60 percent of women workers in developing countries are employed in the **informal economy** (see Figure 1¹); including home-based work, street vending, workshops, sub-contracted work, day-labour (though not including agriculture) and a variety of other piece-meal, unregistered and unregulated work.² Informal employment, while providing a valuable source of income for women, does not provide additional benefits, job security, or the opportunity for promotion or job-training.

Figure 1 - Informal employment as % of non-agricultural employment (1994-2000)



The *World Development Report* estimates that women make up seventy to ninety percent of workers in **export processing zones** (EPZs), often referred to as "sweatshops," worldwide.³ In 2004, EPZs employed over forty-million people, mainly in the developing world.⁴

¹ Compiled using data from: *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*. Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2002.

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/download/women.pdf>

² "Informal employment is comprised of both self-employment in informal enterprises (i.e. small and/or unregistered) and wage employment in informal jobs (i.e., without secure contracts, worker benefits, or social protection)." From: Ibid.

³ *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*. Washington DC: World Bank, 2000. <http://econ.worldbank.org/wdr/>

⁴ *Behind the Brand Names: Working conditions and labour rights in export processing zones*. Brussels: International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, 2004. <http://www.icftu.org/www/PDF/EPZreportE.pdf>

EPZs encompass a variety of industries, including garment assembly in Bangladesh, electronics in China, cocoa harvesting in Cote d'Ivoire, floriculture in Ecuador, carpet-weaving in India, and coffee and tea growing in Kenya. The common thread that links these industries is the need to produce goods for export as quickly and cheaply as possible, with varying results in terms of occupational health and safety, respect for workers' rights and job security. Work in EPZs often involves sixty to eighty hour weeks for less than the legal minimum wage under harsh and often dangerous conditions. Women are subjected to physical, sexual and verbal abuse, forced pregnancy tests, dismissal as a result of marriage or pregnancy, harsh reprisals for attempts to unionize and a lack of access to any benefits. An International Labour Rights Fund report on *Sexual Harassment in the Export Processing Zones of the Dominican Republic* revealed that over forty percent of women workers had experienced sexual harassment, mainly from co-workers, and that when they reported the problem, they were blamed for provoking the harassment by wearing provocative dress or using suggestive language.⁵

Table 1 – A look at women's employment

Globally, women are sixty percent or more of **part-time workers**,⁶ often as a result of their increased responsibilities as parents but also because full-time employment is often unavailable to women. In addition to earning less because they are working less hours, women in part-time work earn less because they have access to less benefits, and because part-time positions tend to be concentrated in lower-paying sectors of the economy (such as the service sector).⁷

	Women as a % of adult labour force (1995/2002)	Unemployment rate by sex (2002)		Women's share of part-time employment (1998/2001) (%)
		Men	Women	
Albania	41	19.1	13.6	--
Colombia	47	8.4	7.3	--
Cyprus	44	4.2	2.6	--
Ecuador	41	14.0	6.0	--
Egypt	22	27.7	5.1	--
France	46	10.1	7.9	80
Mauritius	35	12	8.5	--
Syria	21	24.1	8.3	--

Source: Compiled using data from Statistics and indicators on women and men. United Nations Statistics Division, 2005.
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/indwm/indwm2.htm>

Women are also the majority of workers in the **sex sector**.⁸ Though illegal and unregulated in most countries, and ignored as an economic sector in most budgets; the sex sector generates and consumes a significant amount of revenue, employs an enormous number of people, and affects the health, well-being and economic development of its workers. The sex sector is the one sector of the economy that tends to thrive regardless of upward or downward overall economic shifts; in fact downward economic shifts that eliminate jobs for women often push them into commercial sex-work as a last-resort source of income. An ILO report on the sex sector in Southeast Asia⁹ states that anywhere from 0.25 to 1.5 percent of the total female population is employed in the sex sector, though the circumstances of their employment range from freely chosen work to debt bondage and forced prostitution.

Women represent the vast majority of workers in the **reproductive or care economy**,¹⁰ which raises the question of how we define the "economy," and what types of work are or are not included. To say that women are an increasingly large proportion of the global

⁵Pantaleón, L. Sexual Harassment in the Export Processing Zones of the Dominican Republic. Washington DC: International Labour Rights Fund, 2003.
<http://www.laborrights.org/projects/women/DR%20report.pdf>

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Bardasi, E. and J. Gornick. *Women and Part-Time Employment: Workers' 'Choices' and Wage Penalties in Five Industrialized Countries*. UK: Institute for Social and Economic Research, 2000. <http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/pubs/workpaps/pdf/2000-11.pdf>

⁸ The "sex sector" traditionally comprises prostitution and commercial sex-work. From *The Sex Sector: The economic and social bases of prostitution in Southeast Asia*. Geneva: International Labour Organization, 1998. <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/support/publ/textww.htm#b16>

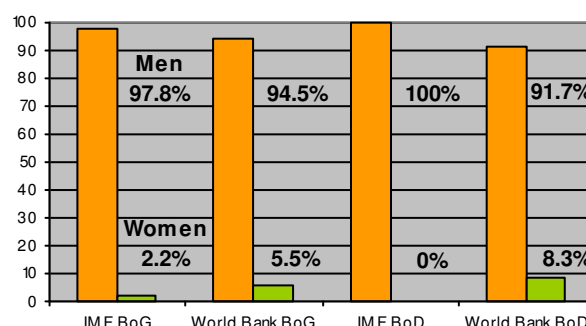
⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ The reproductive economy (also called the care economy) includes infrastructure services for households (sanitation, water, energy, transport), as well as health, education, and welfare services performed within the "private" sphere for no remuneration.

workforce is to imply that women have not been working for centuries. The reality is that women have been and are responsible for reproductive and domestic labour, which is unpaid, does not feature in sector budgets, national accounts or labour statistics, is largely unrecognized as a formal economic contribution, and is generally undervalued in economic and social terms.¹¹ Reproductive and domestic labour constitutes the foundation of the modern working world; it frees men to devote all of their time to paid employment, and it is essential to the reproduction of the global workforce.

Finally, women are in the minority when it comes to **formal, regulated, and paid employment**; as well as **professional, management, and decision-making positions**, including in politics (see Figure 2¹² on women and men in the IMF and World Bank board of directors and board of governors).¹³ A number of policies such as affirmative action have addressed the lack of women professionals and executives in recent years, and the gender balance is gradually changing in most companies. A majority of women executives however have encountered a variety of obstacles to their ability to move up within professional fields, including the "glass ceiling," sexual harassment, and discrimination as a result of pregnancy, child-care or other family responsibilities.¹⁴

Figure 2 - Women and Men in the IMF and World Bank Governing Bodies (2002)



Women's unequal participation in the economy hinders overall development at the local, national and international levels. In *Engendering Development*, the World Bank clearly shows that societies with higher levels of gender inequality also experience slower rates of sustainable economic growth and poverty reduction; as well as less effective governance.¹⁵ While some initiatives such as micro-credit programmes have attempted to increase women's participation in the economy, large-scale change is still lacking. The question of women's economic participation requires a response at the national and international levels in order to build on the achievements of local programmes, mainstream gender and women's issues into the global economy, change the unequal distribution of resources between countries and between the sexes, and improve quality of life on a world-wide scale.

Strategic Objective F.1

"Promote women's economic rights and independence, including access to employment, appropriate working conditions and control over economic resources"

¹¹ Elson, D. "Gender-neutral, gender-blind, or gender-sensitive budgets? Changing the conceptual framework to include women's empowerment and the economy of care." Gender Budget Initiative Background Papers. London: Commonwealth Secretariat, 1999. <http://www.undp.org/gender/CD-Gender-and-Budgets-2004/3.1-care.htm>

¹² Source: *Women Challenging Globalization*. New York: Women's Environment and Development Organization, 2002. http://www.wedo.org/files/ffdreport_eng.pdf

¹³ For more data on women in professional, managerial and legislative positions, see: *Breaking through the Glass Ceiling*. Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2001. <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/support/publ/pdf/btgc.pdf>

¹⁴ For more information on women in political decision-making, download INSTRAW's *Progress Report on Critical Area G. Women in Power and Decision-Making* <http://www.un-instraw.org/>

¹⁵ *Engendering Development: Through Gender Equality in Rights, Resources, and Voice*. Washington: World Bank, 2001. <http://www.worldbank.org/gender/pr/engendersummary.pdf>

Actions to be taken by governments, international and non-governmental organizations and other actors include to: enact and enforce legislation to guarantee the rights of women and men to equal pay for equal work or work of equal value; eliminate discriminatory practices by employers and take appropriate measures in consideration of women's reproductive role and functions; devise mechanisms and take positive action to enable women to gain access to full and equal participation in the formulation of policies and definition of structures; give women equal rights with men to economic resources, including access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, credit, inheritance, natural resources and appropriate new technology; adjust employment policies to facilitate the restructuring of work patterns in order to promote the sharing of family responsibilities; reform laws or enact national policies that support the establishment of labour laws to ensure the protection of all women workers.

The Platform for Action of the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing PfA) addresses women and the economy in very general terms, without addressing the specifics of women's work, whether formal or informal, paid or unpaid. The legislative and policy framework that protects women's participation in the economy is comprehensive and extremely broad, encompassing the rights of workers; rights to land, property and credit; right to inheritance, and right to freedom from discrimination.

Though no universally accepted definition of "women workers" has yet been established, a number of conventions, declarations, resolutions and other agreements address the rights of women workers, including: the Employment Policy Convention (1964);¹⁶ the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;¹⁷ the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966);¹⁸ the Minimum Age Convention (1973);¹⁹ the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW, 1979);²⁰ the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998);²¹ and 185 separate International Labour Organization Conventions,²² all of which apply to women but among which it is worth noting: the Equal Remuneration Convention (C-100, 1951); the Social Policy Convention (C-117, 1962); the Occupational Safety and Health Convention (C-155, 1981); the Work with Family Responsibilities Convention (ILO No. 156 – 1981); the Indigenous and Tribal Populations Convention (C-169, 1989); the Part-Time Work Convention (C-175, 1994); the Home Work Convention (C-177, 1996); the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (C-182, 1999); and the Maternity Protection Convention (C-183, 2000).

Despite the fact that gender disparities in primary and secondary schooling rates are beginning to narrow, and that in some countries women actually outnumber men at the university (tertiary education) level, **disparities in women and men's incomes remain.** The Equal Remuneration Convention (ERC) guarantees the right to "equal

Table 2 – Determinants of inequalities in remuneration for women

Secondary earners	Less free time for paid employment; limited access to benefits of full-time, formal, regulated employment
Weak representation	Representation dominated by men; informal, export production, part-time sectors difficult to organize
Job segregation	Crowding into feminized jobs
Social valuation of skills	Reproductive/care labour accorded low value

Source: Time for Equality at Work. Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2003.
http://www.ilo.org/dyn/declaris/DECLARATIONWEB.DOWNLOAD_BLOB?Var_DocumentID=1558

¹⁶ Employment Policy Convention <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/emploipolicy.htm>

¹⁷ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/ccpr.htm>

¹⁸ International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/cescr.htm>

¹⁹ Minimum Age Convention <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/ageconvention.htm>

²⁰ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women <http://www.ohchr.org/english/law/cedaw.htm>

²¹ ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work <http://www.ilo.org/dyn/declaris/DECLARATIONWEB.INDEXPAGE>

²² International Labour Organization Conventions <http://www.ilo.org/ilolex/english/convdisp2.htm>

remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value.”²³ The determinants of remuneration are many and the relation between them complex; but it has been established that women’s unpaid participation in the reproductive/care economy is a key factor in their lower rates of remuneration. A number of countries, such as Australia²⁴ and the United Kingdom²⁵ have established Equal Opportunities Commissions that monitor discrimination based on sex within the workplace, address specific complaints from individual workers, collect data on women and men’s unequal remuneration, and organize campaigns to bring women’s issues to mainstream gender concerns into employment and labour policies.

Sexual harassment²⁶ in the workplace is a much debated issue that in recent years has generated a substantial body of literature and numerous legal precedents. Sexual harassment is primarily still a “developed world” issue, which is not to say that it does not occur in the developing world, but that the literature and legal proceedings on sexual harassment have mainly been generated in the developed world. Specific legislation on sexual harassment has been adopted in various countries since the early 1990s, including: Argentina, Austria, Chile, Costa Rica, Finland, Italy, Switzerland and the UK, among others; and court cases in a number of other countries have established legal precedents against sexual harassment.²⁷ Globally however, the extent and nature of sexual harassment, and its full impact on women’s labour force participation is not well understood, highlighting the need for more research on this topic, as well as a global legal instrument for addressing sexual harassment.

Making women aware of their labour rights is the first step to ensuring that those rights are promoted in protected within the workplace. **Human rights education**, both for women workers and for employers of all types has been a somewhat neglected area within the broader spectrum of human rights education, though it is fundamental to ensuring equal participation for women in the global economy. Human Rights Education Associates (HREA) has compiled a review of workers rights in international legislation that also includes the right of women.²⁸ In 2000, the ILO published *The ABCs of Women Workers Rights*,²⁹ a comprehensive and user-friendly guide to the legislative and policy framework on women worker’s rights. Rather than citing the text of international conventions, the guide explores women’s issues in the workplace, listing the relevant legislation and making the guide accessible to a wider audience.

Areas for Future Action:

- Establish generally accepted and inclusive definitions of both “the economy” and “women workers” that take into account women’s unpaid participation in the reproductive/care economy;

²³ ERC, article 2.

²⁴ Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (Australia) <http://www.hreoc.gov.au/>

²⁵ Equal Opportunities Commission (UK) <http://www.eoc.org.uk/>

²⁶ In 1991, the European Commission defined sexual harassment as: “conduct of a sexual nature and other conduct based on sex affecting the dignity of women and men at work, including conduct of superiors and colleagues, is unacceptable, if: (a) such conduct is unwelcome, unreasonable and offensive to the recipient; (b) a person’s rejection of, or submission to, such conduct on the part of the employers or workers (including superiors or colleagues) is used explicitly or implicitly as a basis for a decision which affects that person’s access to vocational training, access to employment, continued employment, promotion, salary or any other employment decisions; and/or (c) such conduct creates an intimidating, hostile or humiliating working environment for the recipient.”

²⁷ Aeberhard-Hodges, J. “Sexual harassment in employment: Recent judicial and arbitral trends.” *International Labour Review* 135(5), 1996.

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/support/publ/revue/download/pdf/hodges.pdf>

²⁸ “Human Rights and Work.” Human Rights Education Associates.

http://www.hrea.org/erc/Library/display_doc.php?url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.pdhre.org%2Frights%2Fwork.html&external=N

²⁹ *The ABCs of Women Workers’ Rights*. Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2000.

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/support/publ/xtxtwww.htm#b8449>

- Based on existing successful initiatives, where they exist, develop campaigns to educate women workers about their rights and sensitize employers and trade union leaders to the rights of women workers;
- Develop capacity-building materials, such as impact-assessment guides, to help mainstream gender concerns into employment and labour policies;
- Develop international legal instruments for addressing sexual harassment in the workplace based on a generally accepted definition, and put these instruments into practice through awareness-raising and capacity-building activities;

Strategic Objective F.2

“Facilitate women’s equal access to resources, employment, markets and trade”

Actions to be taken by governments, international and non-governmental organizations and other actors include to: promote and support women’s self-employment and the development of small enterprises, and strengthen women’s access to credit and capital; enhance rural women’s income-generating potential by facilitating their equal access to and control over productive resources; analyse, advise on, coordinate and implement policies that integrate the needs and interests of employed, self-employed and entrepreneurial women into sectoral and inter-ministerial policies, programmes and budgets; review rules and procedures of formal national and international financial institutions that obstruct replication of the Grameen Bank prototype, which provides credit facilities to rural women.

Globally, women have less access to the resources they need to become economically productive and independent, including education; employment; inheritance; land; credit and capital; national and international markets and trade systems; social support networks; and time. Legal and customary barriers to **women’s inheritance, ownership and management of land and other property** is crucial factor to their continued economic subordination, and hinders the effectiveness of projects and programmes designed to address women’s economic participation. In Tanzania, ninety-five percent of rural residents acquire their land through customary laws or inheritance, which are strongly biased towards men. In *My Land: Women’s Perspectives on Secure Tenure in Tanzania*, women, particularly widowed and divorced women, stated that their lack of secure tenure³⁰ to land hindered their ability to provide for their families. There are no international conventions specifically securing women’s right to land ownership, though all of the conventions relating to the elimination of discrimination are applicable to the issue of land rights. In particular, article 2 (item g) of the CEDAW commits state parties to ensuring women’s right “...to have access to agricultural credit and loans, marketing facilities, appropriate technology and equal treatment in land and agrarian reform as well as in land resettlement schemes.”

If women do not own land however, their access to these resources and reform processes is hindered. At the national level, most States have passed legislation expressly forbidding discrimination against women in land ownership or guaranteeing women’s access to land; for example the 1988 Brazilian Constitution guaranteed equality between rural and urban men and women with respect to labour legislation and social rights, as well as the possibility of joint adjudication and land entitlement to couples or women with regard to land

³⁰ “Secure tenure is both the legal right to tenure land and the practical ability to access land.” from *My Land: Women’s Perspectives on Secure Tenure in Tanzania*. Tanzania: Women’s Advancement Trust, 2001. <http://www.wat.kabissa.org/myland.htm#section%201>

ownership.³¹ In practice however, gender-biased processes or attitudes as well as customary or local traditions and practices often supersede the existence of this legislation, and throughout the world women's right to land remains unrealized. In 2000, the Tanzanian NGO Women Advancement Trust (WAT) launched a Campaign for Women's Equal Rights of Access to Land, Property Ownership and Inheritance that aims to educate women, as well as the general public about new laws that guarantee women's right to own and inherit land. Thus far, the campaign has generated activities that include: research on the coverage of women's land rights in the mass media; sensitization workshops for the media on women's land rights; awareness-creation workshop for district leaders and other specific groups (widows, traditional leaders and villagers) on the new land laws; a thirty-minute radio programme on Radio Free Africa; and a variety of other promotional and educational materials.

Micro-credit, micro-finance and micro-enterprise schemes have been fundamental to lifting millions of people, particularly women, out of poverty. 14.2 million poor women have gained access to financial services as a result of micro-credit schemes, though access to these schemes varies widely according to region, with women in Eastern Europe falling behind women from other regions.³² Micro-credit has enabled women to become entrepreneurs, starting their own businesses, producing and selling their own goods and managing their own finances. Moreover, women have become the favoured clients of many micro-finance institutions because they have demonstrated more efficient use of the resources, higher loan re-payment rates; and have used resources to the greater benefits of their families.³³

UN General Assembly Resolution 53/197³⁴ declared 2005 the "International Year of Micro-credit," with the aims of i) recognizing the contributions of micro-credit, micro-finance, and micro-enterprise to national and international development; and ii) encouraging States, the UN system and lending banks to reaffirm their commitment to micro-credit as a crucial poverty-eradication strategy.

Women's and fair-trade collectives/cooperatives have played a key role in securing fair prices for goods produced by women in national and global markets. Cooperatives revolve around a variety of activities including agriculture, crafts and other types of production, credit associations, market groups, day-care centres, village health clinics. They offer groups of women the opportunity to combine their strengths, skills and resources; creating and managing successful businesses that would not have been possible for individual women or managing credit services that grant loans to individuals. In many communities, women's cooperatives have become powerful economic forces that also provide information, education and skills training to younger women. The International Development Research Centre is funding local women's cooperatives in Morocco as part of a conservation initiative for the argan tree. Women have received technical, professional and personal training that has helped improve the efficiency of their use of the argan tree, contributing to the improvement of their socio-economic status, the re-forestation of argan forests, and the promotion of regional tourism.³⁵

³¹ Guivant, J. *Agrarian Change, Gender and Land Rights: A Brazilian Case Study*. Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 2003. [http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/\(httpPublications\)/F8EA8CE638EBA384C1256D560030A7D7?OpenDocument](http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/(httpPublications)/F8EA8CE638EBA384C1256D560030A7D7?OpenDocument)

³² Cheston, S. and L. Kuhn. "Empowering Women Through Microfinance." in *Pathways Out of Poverty: Innovations in Microfinance for the Poorest Families*. Washington DC: Kumarian Press.

³³ "Empowering Women with Microcredit." *2000 Microcredit Summit Campaign Report*. Washington DC: Micro-credit Summit Campaign, 2000. <http://www.microcreditsummit.org/campaigns/report00.html>

³⁴ General Assembly Resolution 53/197: http://www.uncdf.org/english/microfinance/yom/UNGA-YoM_eng.pdf

³⁵ Charrouf, Z. and S. Dubé. "Helping Moroccan Women Preserve the Argan Tree at the Gateway to the Sahara." IDRC, 2000. http://web.idrc.ca/en/ev-5267-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

In 2003, the Afro-Asian Rural Development Organization held a seminar on the “Empowerment of Women through Agriculture”³⁶ during which ten countries (Egypt, Ghana, Jordan, Malaysia, Mauritius, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Sudan, and Syria) presented case studies of women’s agricultural cooperatives. The studies concluded that when women’s cooperatives have access to the resources they need to fully implement their work plans, they can make a fundamental difference, not only to women’s socio-economic status but to community well-being through the establishment of family planning and health care clinics; literacy and training programmes for girls; and banking and credit facilities, among other initiatives. In some countries however, women’s cooperatives were hindered by the same barriers that individual women face in terms of land ownership, access to credit and other resources.

The continued marginalization of women in the global economy hinders economic growth and poverty eradication. While they have brought enormous benefits to some women, micro-credit programmes and micro-enterprise are small-scale initiatives that do not address women’s exclusion from the mainstream global economy. The danger of focusing too heavily on small-scale funding initiatives is that women will remain on the sidelines of the global economy, unable to participate in economic decision-making at the national and international levels, and unable to implement the changes necessary to eradicate poverty among significant numbers of people.

Areas for Future Action:

- Conduct systematic evaluation of information and education campaigns on women’s land rights to determine their impact, and replicate successful practices in other areas;
- Conduct a review of women’s cooperatives world-wide with the aim of identifying good practices for replication, and strengthening existing initiatives;
- Initiatives to set up and strengthen micro-credit and cooperative programmes should focus on young women, indigenous women, migrant women and other marginalized groups that usually predominate among the poorest women;
- The views and experiences of women involved in micro-credit and cooperative programmes, as well as other small-scale initiatives should be included in national and international decision-making processes related agricultural, labour, trade, and other policies in order to “scale-up” the benefits of these initiatives.

Strategic Objective F.3

“Provide business services, training and access to markets, information and technology, particularly to low-income women”

Actions to be taken by governments, international and non-governmental organizations and other actors include to: develop programmes that provide training and retraining, particularly in new technologies, and affordable services to women; provide outreach programmes to inform low-income and poor women, particularly in rural and remote areas, of opportunities for market and technology access; disseminate information about successful women entrepreneurs in both traditional and non-traditional economic activities; take measures to ensure equal access of women to ongoing training in the workplace.

³⁶ Empowerment of Women through Agriculture Seminar (AARDO) http://www.aardo.org/workshop_seminar/backgrou2.htm

Targeted information and training are essential in order to increase women's participation in the global economy. From skills training and money management courses for women's cooperatives or micro-enterprise programmes, to university-level courses on the gender impacts of macro-economic and labour policies, information and training are bringing women's issues and gender considerations to local, national and international attention.

A Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) survey demonstrated that "...female farmers receive only five percent of all agricultural extension services worldwide and that only 15 percent of the world's extension agents are women..." despite the fact that in many countries women represent more than fifty percent of the agricultural labour force.³⁷ Agricultural extension services usually target farmers who own land and, since women are a small minority of land-owners, education and training services do not always reach them even though existing initiatives prove that targeting women for education and information raises agricultural productivity. A national information campaign targeted at women as part of a National Extension Project in Kenya resulted in a twenty-eight percent increase in yields of corn, an eighty percent increase in yields of beans and an eighty-four percent increase in yields of potatoes. FAO has developed a number of capacity-building courses and materials for women agricultural workers, including numeracy and simple bookkeeping training; as well as materials for people designing information campaigns around nutrition.³⁸

Skills-training targeted to women is essential to increasing and improving their economic participation, and protecting them from poverty and sexual exploitation. Whether in agriculture, production of specific goods, information technologies (IT) or other areas, skills training for women and girls has made a fundamental difference to their participation in the economy. For example, the Nigerian Association of University Women (NAUW) conducts skills-training programmes for adolescent girls that are leaving school, emphasizing training in IT skills.³⁹ In Cambodia, APHEDA has trained a number of teachers and other instructors in offering skills training to women in fields such as textile and design, tailoring, electrical, hairdressing, typing, computer and office skills and agricultural training including backyard fish farming and vegetable production. As a result of the programme, 1730 women completed skills training in 2003, and an evaluation of the 2002 programme showed that sixty-five percent of the graduates (1236 women) gained employment while a further thirty-five percent were working from their homes.⁴⁰

Areas for Future Action:

- Ensure that agricultural extension and other industry-based training and information programmes specifically target and include women;
- Based on successful experiences, replicate skills-training programmes for women that emphasize practical employment skills and follow-up programmes, and ensure that women and girls are able to parlay training into gainful and decent employment;
- At the university level, ensure that economics courses include a gender component that examines the gendered impact of economic, financial and trade policies on women and women's employment. Similarly, ensure that gender

³⁷ "Gender and Food Security: Education, Extension and Communication." Food and Agriculture Organization <http://www.fao.org/gender/en/educ-e.htm>

³⁸ *Social communication in nutrition: a methodology for intervention*. Rome: Food and Agriculture Organization, 1994.

http://www.fao.org/documents/show_cdr.asp?url_file=/DOCREP/T0807e/T0807e00.htm

³⁹ Local, National and Regional Advocacy Initiatives. International Federation of University Women. <http://www.ifuw.org/advocacy/nfa-advocacy.htm#finland>

⁴⁰ *Donor Report on Skills Training for Women & Rural Communities*. Australia: APHEDA, 2003.

http://www.apheda.org.au/projects/cambodia/news/1096607044_15646.html

studies courses programmes integrate women's participation in the global economy as a key avenue for their development.

Strategic Objective F.4

"Strengthen women's economic capacity and commercial networks"

Actions to be taken by governments, international and non-governmental organizations and other actors include to: integrate a gender perspective into all economic restructuring and structural adjustment policies; promote gender equality through the promotion of women's studies and through the use of the results of studies and gender research in all fields; recognize and encourage the contribution of research by women scientists and technologists; ensure that policies and regulations do not discriminate against micro, small and medium-scale enterprises run by women.

A substantial body of research exists on the **gender impacts of macro-economic and labour policies**. Conducted mainly by academic institutions, civil society research centres, and UN agencies, this research looks at the actual or potential effect of economic policies on women. This significant body of research is rarely applied to the implementation of existing policies however, nor is it used to guide the development of new ones. In *Engendering Macroeconomics and Macroeconomic Policies*⁴¹ Nilufer Cagatay looks at the bi-directional interaction of gender relations and macroeconomics, concluding not only that the effects of macroeconomic policies differ according to gender, but that gender inequalities cause macroeconomic problems. Research into macroeconomic policies from a gender perspective is fundamentally a question of identifying which policies most effectively promote gender equality, poverty reduction and economic growth simultaneously.

Encouraging critical reflection on the gender impacts of macroeconomic policies is fundamental to ensuring that they are developed and implemented from a gender perspective. The International Development Research Centre is funding the Knowledge Networking Program on Engendering Macroeconomics and International Economics, which encourages PhD students in economics from developing countries to undertake research on the gender impacts of macro-economic and social policies.⁴² The World Bank Institute's Poverty and Growth Programme offers and e-learning course on Gender and Macroeconomics that looks at the links between gender and poverty, trade, access to financial resources, and economic development.⁴³ In 2002, the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO) published *Women Challenging Globalization*,⁴⁴ which provided a critical review from a gender perspective of the policies and actions promoted in the Monterrey Consensus, adopted by the International Conference on Financing for Development⁴⁵ (2002). The review concluded that the conference "...failed to challenge the current macroeconomic framework that perpetuates global imbalances, inequality and suffering."⁴⁶

⁴¹ Cagatay, N. *Engendering Macro-economics and Macro-economic Policies*. New York: United Nations Development Programme, 1998.

<http://www.undp.org/poverty/publications/wkpaper/wp6/wp6-nilufer.pdf>

⁴² Knowledge Networking Program on Engendering Macroeconomics and International Economics http://web.idrc.ca/es/ev-35178-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

⁴³ Gender and Macroeconomics e-Learning Course

<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/WBI/WBIPROGRAMS/PGLP/0,,contentMDK:20281751~menuPK:461274~pagePK:64156158~piPK:64152884~theSitePK:461246,00.html>

⁴⁴ *Women Challenging Globalization*. New York: Women's Environment and Development Organization, 2002.

http://www.wedo.org/files/ffdreport_eng.pdf

⁴⁵ For more information on gender and financing for development, download INSTRAW's Occasional Paper No. 3 on *Gender Issues and Concerns in Financing for Development* <http://www.un-instraw.org>

⁴⁶ WEDO, 2002.

Gender impact-assessments, a review of the potential or actual impact of policies on gender equality and women's status are rarely conducted on new or existing macroeconomic policies, with the result that gender is not taken into account in the implementation or evaluation of these policies. While gender-neutral policies do not overtly discriminate against women, the fact that they do not recognize women's distinct realities means that the impact of these policies can be less beneficial or even negative for women. Gender impact assessments have been used to guide the implementation of development cooperation projects with success, but they have yet to be widely used at the national level to guide the implementation of policy. The British government's Women and Equality Unit has developed a framework for conducting gender impact assessments on policies that emphasizes the collection of data, communication and monitoring and evaluation.⁴⁷

Areas for Future Action:

- Systematically expand the use of gender impact-assessment to national-level policy-making, using existing guidelines, manuals and other materials;
- Based on existing experiences, continue to promote the development of critical research on macroeconomic policies from a gender perspective, and explore new ways of ensuring that this research makes an impact on economic policy-making, with an emphasis on monitoring and evaluation systems.

Strategic Objective F.5

“Eliminate occupational segregation and all forms of employment discrimination”

Actions to be taken by governments, international and non-governmental organizations and other actors include to: eliminate discriminatory practices by employers on the basis of women's reproductive roles and functions, including refusal of employment and dismissal of women due to pregnancy and breast-feeding responsibilities; recognize collective bargaining as a right and as an important mechanism for eliminating wage inequality for women and to improve working conditions; Promote the election of women trade union officials and ensure that trade union officials elected to represent women are given job protection and physical security in connection with the discharge of their functions.

Occupational segregation and employment discrimination against women begins at birth, before women even enter the labour market. Girls have less access to education or vocational training and are assigned domestic duties that boys are not required to perform. The burden of women's domestic labour affects their capacity to enter the labour market, and their chances of securing formal and stable employment in the labour market. Thus women predominate in informal, unstable, home-based and part-time employment. With the achievement of gender parity in education closer than ever, the need to ensure that women's equal access to education is translated into equal access to decent work is becoming more important.

Women may choose not to follow certain career paths because they anticipate discrimination, which in part explains the continued absence of women from the science,

⁴⁷ *Gender Impact Assessment*. London: Department of Trade and Industry (Women and Equality Unit).
http://www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk/equality/gender_impact_assessment.pdf

mathematics and technology (SMT) fields.⁴⁸ It should be noted that the reverse also applies to men; many men will not pursue careers in fields they perceive as “feminine” such as nursing. However the fields perceived as “masculine” tend to be higher-paying, more stable and more socially valued, whereas the reverse is true for fields perceived as “feminine;” jobs are lower-paying, less secure and carry less social prestige.⁴⁹

Within employment, women face **discrimination as a result of their reproductive role**; women are seen as a “bad investment” in employment terms because they may one day get pregnant and take maternity leave, costing the employer money in maternity benefits, replacement employees, and breast-feeding time, and on-site child care facilities.⁵⁰ As a result of this perception, women are often passed over for certain responsibilities or promotions, and in many cases are not even hired. In Australia, the Sex Discrimination Commissioner carries out research, policy and education activities that focus on equal pay, career options for women in the finance industry, and eliminating sexual harassment from the workplace.⁵¹

Women account for only about a third of global **trade union membership** and represent one per cent of the decision-making bodies of unions.⁵² In a survey of unions conducted by the ILO, women identified a number of barriers to union membership that included lack of understanding of how unions can help them; fear of reprisals from employers; conflicting family responsibilities; and male-dominated culture/activities of the union.⁵³ In 2002, the International Confederation of Trade Unions launched the *Unions for Women-Women for Unions Campaign*, which aims to increase women’s membership in trade unions in general, increase the number of women in decision-making positions within unions; and mainstream gender and women workers’ issues into trade union activism.⁵⁴

Unions however tend to be a feature of the formal, regulated economy and, as discussed, women predominate in the informal, part-time and reproductive economies, where unionization is a remote or non-existent possibility.⁵⁵ To counteract this gap, women in many countries have formed women’s labour unions, which are organized not around a specific trade but around women workers’ rights in general, for example the *Union Nacional Femenina de Trabajadoras Dominicanas* (National Union of Women Workers) in the Dominican Republic.

The ILO has produced two manuals that aim to familiarize union activists with some of the key gender concerns in employment and help them integrate those concerns into collective bargaining processes and agreements: *Gender Equality: A Guide for Collective Bargaining*,⁵⁶ and *Promoting Gender Equality: A Resource Kit for Trade Unions*.⁵⁷ These manuals address a variety of issues including how to mainstream gender in trade union activism, working conditions, maternity and family responsibilities, the rights of non-permanent and

⁴⁸ For more information on women and girls in SMT, download INSTRAW’s *Progress Report on Critical Area B. Education and Training of Women*.

<http://www.un-instraw.org>

⁴⁹ *Time for Equality at Work*. Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2003.

http://www.ilo.org/dyn/declaris/DECLARATIONWEB.DOWNLOAD_BLOB?Var_DocumentID=1558

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Australia – Sex Discrimination Commissioner. http://www.hreoc.gov.au/sex_discrimination/

⁵² *Promoting Gender Equality: A Resource Kit for Trade Unions*. Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2002.

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/advance/trade.htm>

⁵³ *The Role of Trade Unions in Promoting Gender Equality: Report of the ILO-ICFTU Survey*. Geneva: International Labour Organization.

http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/download/fin_rep.pdf

⁵⁴ ICFTU Unions for Women-Women for Unions Campaign: <http://www.icftu.org/focus.asp?Issue=u4w&Language=EN>

⁵⁵ “Unions Are Important for Women” AFL-CIO. <http://www.aflcio.org/aboutunions/joinunions/whyjoin/uniondifference/uniondiff13.cfm>

⁵⁶ *Gender Equality: A Guide for Collective Bargaining*. Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2002.

<http://www.itcilo.it/actrav/english/library/socdiag/v07000.htm>

⁵⁷ *Gender Equality: A Resource Kit for Trade Unions*. Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2003.

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/advance/trade.htm>

vulnerable workers, sexual harassment, and increasing women's participation in collective bargaining.

Areas for Future Action:

- Conduct advocacy and other campaigns to inform women of the benefits of union membership, while increasing efforts to integrate gender and women's issues into union activism;
- In the informal and reproductive economies where unionization is not always possible, explore alternative ways of promoting and protecting the rights of women workers, such as women's union or cooperatives.

Strategic Objective F.6

“Promote harmonization of work and family responsibilities for women and men”

Actions to be taken by governments, international and non-governmental organizations and other actors include to: ensure, through legislation, incentives and/or encouragement, opportunities for women and men to take job-protected parental leave and to have parental benefits; promote the equal sharing of responsibilities for the family by men and women; develop policies to change attitudes that reinforce the division of labour based on gender in order to promote the concept of shared family responsibility for work in the home, particularly in relation to children and elder care; examine a range of policies and programmes, including social security legislation and taxation systems to determine how to promote gender equality and flexibility; provide support services and facilities, such as on-site child care at workplaces and flexible working arrangements.

Women without children or older dependent relatives earn more money, are promoted faster, and are more likely to be working in formal employment with health and other benefits. Conversely, women who dedicate more time to family have less earning power or possibility for training or promotion. Population ageing has also had a significant impact on women's earning power, as women are increasingly faced with the responsibility of caring for older family-members.

Globally, **the definition of the family is changing**; yet national and international policies have not kept pace with these changes. The increase in female-headed households, single-parent families, multi-generational families; stable but unmarried couples; and single-sex couples, among other changes, requires a change in the definitions of both “household” and “family” in order to eliminate inequalities in the administration of benefits such as health insurance, social security, or parental leave. In Brazil for example, the 2003 civil code (*Código Civil*) and the 1988 Constitution both recognized the changing nature of the family by including “stable unions” (*união estável*) and single-parent families (*entidade mono-parental*) under the State protection extended to families.⁵⁸ Though this represents progress, many other versions of the family (co-habitation, affective families or unofficially adopted children, homosexual unions, etc.) are still not recognized or protected by legal statutes or national policies. By contrast, Japan uses the concept of “household” (*setai*), a

⁵⁸ Sorj, B. “Reconciling Work and Family: Issues and Policies in Brazil.” *Conditions of Work and Employment Series* (No. 8). Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2004. <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/condtrav/publ/8cwe.htm>

group of people sharing living quarters and expenses, in the administration of national health insurance and social welfare programmes.⁵⁹

The **conflict between work and family responsibilities**, and the struggle to find a balance between the two affects the happiness, well-being, health and productivity of all workers; though particularly of women workers as a result of the sexual division of labour. The entry of women into the labour force has tended to exacerbate this conflict, as it has not been accompanied by a concurrent sharing of domestic and family responsibilities between women and men. Time-use surveys from many countries demonstrate that women are still responsible for a disproportionate burden of domestic labour, even when they perform the same number of hours of paid labour as men.⁶⁰ The conflict between work and family responsibilities is particularly acute in the case of single-parent families, where sharing domestic responsibilities is not an option and the tasks of family and child-care are often placed on the shoulders of older, retired women or female children.

The increasing difficulty of balancing work and family life has also remained a private matter,⁶¹ as national policies on flexible work-time, workplace child-care, parental leave and other issues have not been forthcoming in most countries, with a few notable exceptions. In countries with comprehensive work and family-legislation, only formal workers in regulated employment sectors are entitled to these benefits and, as discussed under previous Strategic Objectives, women tend to be concentrated in informal, temporary or wage-labour employment without access to employment benefits. Moreover, these policies and benefits are often concentrated around pregnancy (maternity/parental leave, breast-feeding time, etc.) and do not address the ongoing struggle to balance work and family responsibilities.⁶²

Policies that facilitate the balancing of work and family responsibilities include, *inter alia*: government social assistance programmes; telecommuting, which allows workers to work from home; flexible and shared-time arrangements, which allow workers to structure their days around their familial responsibilities; maternity and parental leave, which allows both parents to take time off to be with newly-born children; day-cares, crèches, or pre-schools, which have the added benefit of beginning children's education at an earlier age; on-site childcare facilities, which reduces the economic burden of external day-care and allows parents to see their children throughout the day; and breast-feeding time, which allows mothers to continue to breast-feed newborn infants after they return to work.

In Ireland, the National Framework Committee for Work Life Balance Policies⁶³ has funded a number of workplace initiatives designed to pilot-test and integrate work-life balance and family-friendly policies. The majority of the projects have reported successful results in terms of maintaining productivity and worker satisfaction. In Canada, employees of the federal government can share up to a full year of maternal/parental leave with benefits.⁶⁴ Early research suggests that family-friendly policies such as parental leave, reduced or flexible work hours and early childhood education and care programmes have positive

⁵⁹ Abe, M. et al. "Reconciling Work and Family: Issues and Policies in Japan." *Conditions of Work and Employment Series* (No. 5). Geneva: International Labour Organization, 2003. <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/condtrav/publ/5cwe.htm>

⁶⁰ *Improving Measurement of Paid & Unpaid Work: Resources on Time-Use Surveys*. New York: United Nations Statistics Division, 2000. <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/methods/timeuse/tusresource.htm>

⁶¹ Sorj, 2004

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ WorkLife Balance <http://www.worklifebalance.ie/>

⁶⁴ *Maternity, Paternity, and Parental Leaves in the OECD Countries 1998-2002*. Clearinghouse on International Developments in Child, Youth and Family Policies at Columbia University. <http://www.childpolicyintl.org/issuebrief/issuebrief5table1.pdf>

impacts on parents' quality of life, maternal and child health, and children's cognitive and social development and educational performance.⁶⁵

Areas for Future Action:

- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation of family-friendly policies in order to assess their impact on families and with a view towards replicating successful policies;
- Involve working families from all sectors in decision-making regarding labour and other policies that affect the attempt to balance work and family responsibilities.

Additional Areas of Concern

Women migrant workers, including domestic workers, contribute to the economy of the sending country through their remittances and also to the economy of the receiving country through their participation in the labour force. However, in many receiving countries, migrant women experience higher levels of unemployment compared with both non-migrant workers and male migrant workers.
-Beijing Platform for Action (paragraph 154)

The International Convention on the Protection of Migrant Workers and their families (1990) entered into force in 2002, guaranteeing those who migrate for labour purposes, as well as the family members they bring with them, their basic human rights within their country of destination.

Though the Beijing PfA mentions women migrant workers, a comprehensive examination of the particular hardships, discrimination and inequality faced by these women is missing. Women's migration has increased at an astonishing rate over the last ten years; women have migrated in search of work as domestic workers, nannies, sex workers, factory workers, seasonal wage labour, and multiplicity of other formal and informal jobs. The category of migration obscures a number of subtle and not-so-subtle differences in women's movement for labour purposes. Some women migrate voluntarily on their own, other are forced to migrate on their own as a result of natural disasters, conflict, persecution or economic necessity. Still other women are trafficked to work in sweatshops in various countries, or even to work as sexual slaves.

The Gender Promotion Programme at the ILO has developed a series of information and capacity-building materials on the rights of women migrant workers that includes country case studies (from Bolivia, Costa Rica, Ethiopia, Italy, Japan, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Philippines, Sri Lanka, and the United Arab Emirates) and a manual aimed at preparing women for labour migration and helping them protect themselves from exploitation and abuse.⁶⁶ In addition, Human Rights Education Associates (HREA) has produced an online guide to the rights of migrant workers.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Kamerman, S. et al. "Social Policies, Family Types and Child Outcomes in Selected OECD Countries." *OECD Social, Employment and Migration Working Papers* (No. 6). Paris: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2003. <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/26/46/2955844.pdf>

⁶⁶ *Preventing Discrimination, Exploitation and Abuse of Women Migrant Workers: An Information Guide*. Geneva: International Labour Organization, <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/gems/advocacy/protect.htm>

⁶⁷ Human rights education and migrant workers. HREA - <http://www.pdhre.org/rights/migrants.html>

Conclusion

Women's participation in the global economy is a broad and multi-faceted phenomenon that is extremely difficult to define. "Women's work" ranges from selling handicrafts in village markets to making decisions about national and international economic and labour policies in political processes; encompassing everything else along the way and always combined with their child-care and domestic duties in the reproductive/care economy. The continued inequalities and inequities in women's economic participation represent an impediment to economic growth and poverty eradication at the global level, and family and individual well-being at the household level. Many of the actions required to increase and improve women's participation in the economy are also required to address poverty and economic injustice in general, including a rethinking of global production and trade systems, international markets and the relationship between developed and developing countries.

But women also require action in order to combat specific inequalities at work that are a result of their sex such as discriminatory hiring practices, sexual harassment, and dismissal based on pregnancy. Mainstreaming a gender perspective in economic policies, processes and programmes is fundamental to ensuring women's equal participation in the economy; as well as ensuring that the economy itself supports, rather than punishes, the workers that sustain it.