



## 3. Promote gender equality and empower women

Gender equality and the empowerment of women are essential to overcome poverty. The achievement of all of the Goals depends on progress under MDG 3. The ILO works to advance understanding of the vital links between decent work, poverty reduction and gender equality. Women's greater access to employment and income underpins efforts to close the gender gap in education and to empower women.

### Decent work and gender equality

Gender equality cross-cuts the ILO Decent Work Agenda, which encompasses rights, employment and income, social protection and social dialogue. The ILO mainstreams gender concerns in all of its policies and programmes through -

- Promotion of equality of opportunity in access to jobs, income-earning activities, assets, education and training;
- Gender-specific interventions as well as action aimed at both men and women;
- Social protection initiatives;
- Women's empowerment through organizations of employers and workers;
- Social dialogue and collective bargaining for gender equality;
- Promotion of respect for rights and international labour standards.

Decent, productive jobs are the most effective route out of poverty [3]. But gender inequality in the labour market persists through occupational segregation, wage gaps, higher relative unemployment rates, overrepresentation in the informal economy, inadequate social protection and economic insecurity. Related to women's standing in households, their employment can contribute to achieving the MDGs on health and education, as illustrated in the report prepared for ILO/UNDP, *The role of employment in promoting the Millennium Development Goals* (2005).

### Measuring progress

Policymakers need better data to chart progress in relation to jobs. For Goal 3, Indicator 11 - "Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector" – the ILO is responsible for compiling and analysing the master set of data at national, regional and global levels. This feeds into the review of the Millennium Declaration [53] and the eight Goals [18]. The ILO and others are recommending an improved indicator that would refer to formal and informal employment in the agricultural and non-agricultural sectors for men and women.

### Ensuring a gender-equitable world of work

The *ILO Action Plan on Gender Equality and Mainstreaming* (2001) helps institutionalize gender mainstreaming and promote gender equality in the world of work [54]. The Plan entails –

- gender analyses of social and labour issues and gender-specific development tools;
- gender-disaggregated data and indicators;
- a new mainstreaming methodology to ensure that gender concerns are incorporated in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of all ILO activities.

The *ILO Bureau for Gender Equality* [25] -

- disseminates information on gender issues;
- assists ILO constituents and staff to be more effective in increasing gender equality [55];
- monitors the implementation of the ILO's strategy for gender equality;
- liaises with the UN system, NGOs, academic and women's organizations.

The Bureau tracks the representation of women in ILO meetings, and highlights resolutions such as that adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2004 on the promotion of gender equality, pay equity and maternity protection [56].

### Gender and poverty reduction

The ILO promotes gender concerns in poverty reduction strategies. The involvement of representatives of employers and of workers is key to their sustainability. ILO gender-specific resources include:

### Target 4

Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015

### Indicators

9. Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education

10. Ratio of literate women to men 15-24 years old

11. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector

12. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

"Promoting gender equality and eliminating all forms of discrimination at work are essential to defeating poverty."

*Working out of Poverty* (ILO, 2003)

It is necessary to ensure that gender equality is a primary goal in all area(s) of social and economic development – Platform for Action to bring gender into the mainstream of society, **UN Fourth World Conference on Women**, Beijing, 1995.



## Decent Work and the Millennium Development Goals – MDG 3

- *The Capacity Building Programme on Gender Equality, Poverty and Employment (GPE)* provides syntheses of main issues, reviews of gender-sensitized policies to eradicate poverty, and success stories; a *Modular Package Guide* assists policymakers, workers' and employers' organizations [57].
- *Managing and Sharing Knowledge on Gender Equality in the World of Work* provides an information base on integrating gender into education policies, employment strategies and national development plans [58].
- *Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality (WEDGE)* develops strategic partnerships and promotes economic opportunities for women entrepreneurs, and better advocacy and voice for women operating in business [43]. Its training package and factsheets address a range of entrepreneurship issues.

### International labour standards in support of rights for women

International labour standards require the elimination of sex discrimination in employment and occupation, while also providing for equal remuneration and maternity protection. Further, they guarantee freedom of association for employers and workers. Monitoring of ratified Conventions by an independent ILO expert group keeps the spotlight on how these instruments are applied.

In addition, global reports under the *ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work*, 1998 [7] illustrate how countries can ensure respect for the principle of eliminating discrimination. Raising awareness of equal rights helps to create a culture of opportunity.

#### Relevant international labour standards [ 8 ]

- Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)
- Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)
- Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No. 156) and Recommendation (No. 165), 1981
- Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183)
- Human Resources Development Convention, 1975 (No. 142) and Recommendation, 2004 (No. 195)

### Ensuring equal access to education

Serious disparities in access to education between girls and boys exist in many countries. Women need education to break out of the low-skill, low-wage and vulnerable work that in turn discourages their children's school attendance (see MDG 2). Literacy training, skills development, promotion of teachers' status and rights, and the fight against child labour also contribute to achieving MDG 3.

The ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) participates in the UN Girl's Education Initiative [51]. Faced with limited resources, parents may invest in the education of sons only, and focus their daughters on household and domestic work. The ILO cooperates with teachers' unions to reduce the dropout rates of girls at risk of child labour. This forms part of ILO efforts towards gender equality.

### ILO publications relevant to MDG 3

- *The role of employment in promoting the Millennium Development Goals*. ILO/UNDP, 2005.
- *Gender equality and decent work: good practices at the workplace*. ILO, 2005.
- *Employers' organizations taking the lead on gender equality: case studies from 10 countries*. ILO, 2005.
- *Promoting Gender Equality: Guide on ILO Conventions and Recommendations of particular concern to women workers*. ILO, 2004.
- *Social Dialogue and Poverty Reduction Strategies: A guide to the introduction of gender equity*. ILO, 2004.
- *GET Ahead for Women in Enterprise - Training Package and Resource Kit*. ILO, 2004.
- *A training policy model for enhancing employability and gender equity*. ILO, 2004.
- *E-quality@work: An information base on Equal Employment Opportunities for Women and Men*. ILO, 2004.

**The UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** forbids discrimination based on sex in all fields of women's lives, including employment [59]

All ILO member States are obliged to promote, respect and realize the **elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation**, forced labour and child labour, as well as ensure respect for freedom of association and effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining. *ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, 1998* [7].

Girls still lag behind boys in school enrolment in many developing countries *Millennium Development Goals Report, 2005*.

Women still face higher unemployment rates than men in spite of a strong increase in the number of working women in the last 10 years. Women still lack equal pay. Addressing differences in legal rights, labour market opportunities, public life participation and decision-making is crucial to improve the situation of women and reduce poverty.

*ILO Global Employment Trends for Women, 2004* [60].



## Decent Work and the Millennium Development Goals – MDG 3

- *Time for equality at work.* ILO, 2003.
- *Identification of Economic Opportunities for Women's Groups and Communities.* ILO, 2003.
- *An information guide - Preventing discrimination, exploitation and abuse of women migrant workers.* ILO, 2003.
- *The incorporation of gender in employment and anti-poverty policies: challenges for the future.* Discussion Paper. ILO, 2003.
- *Promotion of gender equality in action against child labour and trafficking: A practical guide for organizations,* ILO, 2003.
- *Modular Package on gender, poverty and employment. Reader's Kit.* ILO, 2002.
- *Women and Men in the Informal Economy – A Statistical Picture.* ILO, 2002.
- *Promoting gender equality: A resource guide for trade unions.* ILO, 2002.
- *Incorporating Gender Issues in Labour Statistics.* Bureau of Statistics Working Paper. ILO, 1997.

Blue text and numbers in brackets [..] are linked to websites. See attached list of reference materials.

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