

# GENDER EQUALITY AND GLOBAL SOLIDARITY:

Decent work and the Millennium Development Goals



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# **GENDER EQUALITY AND GLOBAL SOLIDARITY:**

Decent work and the Millennium Development Goals

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

This publication aims to inform trade unionists in Ireland about global solidarity in relation to women's access to trade union demands for Decent Work for All and in progressing commitments on gender equality and women's empowerment under the United Nation's Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). A specific emphasis is given to the impact of these instruments on gender equality in the current economic crisis. It will help to give trade unionists who are involved in global solidarity work to be better informed about gender equality in a global context and to give trade unions some practical strategies and actions about how they can advocate for women's rights to decent work, and gender equality and women's empowerment under the MDGs.

The report is targeted at trade union leaders, members, activists and personnel in trade unions. It will also be a resource for the ICTU's affiliate Global Solidarity Committees and for global solidarity training for trade unions.

As well as being a fundamental human right, gender equality is essential for poverty reduction and sustained economic growth. Evidence from research studies show that the countries that have improved the status of women, for example through improved access to employment, decent work, health care, education and credit, have stronger economic growth and lower rates of poverty. Although many commentators argue that gender equality must be a pre-requisite of development strategies on growth and poverty reduction, it is essential also that access to Decent Work for All is a core part of this agenda.

**Section 2** of the publication looks at gender equality and Decent Work for All and points to recent development in women's decent work and the impact of the global economic and financial crisis on women's access to decent work.

**Section 3** looks at the implementation of the MDGs from a gender equality perspective and shows what progress has been made to date in the meeting the goals and in relation to decent work.

**Section 4** concludes the report and points to actions that can be taken by trade unions to progress global solidarity around the issues of gender equality, decent work and meeting the MDGs.



## 2 GENDER EQUALITY AND DECENT WORK FOR ALL

### I INTRODUCTION

*We strongly support fair globalization and resolve to make the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of our relevant national and international policies as well as our national development strategies.*

Statement made by Heads of Governments at the United Nations World Summit, 2005

Globally the number of working poor has increased by 40 million as a result of the economic crisis. The total number of job losses worldwide escalated to 205 million in 2010, resulting in a global unemployment rate of 6.1% in 2012, compared to a pre-crisis unemployment rate of 5.4%. The ILO predicts that unemployment will remain over 6% until 2016 and that by 2012 unemployment will hit 202 million, an increase of 2 million over previous forecasts (ILO 2012).

#### Some facts and figures about women and decent work

- Women earn only 10% of the world's income and yet carry out two-thirds of the world's unpaid work. Women spend at least twice as much time as men on domestic work, and when all work – paid and unpaid – is taken into account, women work longer hours than men.
- On average women earn three-quarters of men's earnings for the same work or work of an equal value.
- The informal sector is an important source of employment for both women and men in the less developed regions. Around 60% of women work in informal employment outside of agriculture. In this sector women have insecure and poor working conditions, a lack of social protection and have the greatest difficulty in being a member of a trade union.
- Vulnerable employment – own-account work and contributing family work – is prevalent in many countries in Africa and Asia, especially among women.
- Occupational segregation and gender wage gaps continue to persist in all regions. Part-time employment is common for women in most of the more developed regions and some less developed regions, and it is increasing almost everywhere for both women and men.

## II WHAT IS DECENT WORK?

*...global economic integration has caused many countries and sectors to face challenges of income inequality, continuing high levels of unemployment and poverty, vulnerability of economies to external shocks, and the growth of unprotected work and the informal economy, which impact on the employment relationship and the protections it can offer.*

ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization adopted at the International Labour Conference, 97th Session, 2008: 5

The concept of decent work was first introduced at the International Labour Conference in 1999 (87th session) in the Report of the Director-General of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). This stated that the primary goal of the ILO was to promote opportunities for women and men to have decent and productive work, in conditions that provide freedom, equality, security and human dignity. Today the ILO defines decent work in the following way:

*[Decent work] sums up the aspirations of people in their working lives – their aspirations for opportunity and income; rights, voice and recognition; family stability and personal development; and fairness and gender equality.*

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) is responsible for setting labour standards and monitoring decent work globally. Decent work is progressed through global, regional and country programmes. As a tri-partite body (made up of governments, employers and trade unions) trade unions play a key role in both the formulating of policy but also in the implementation of country programmes. The ILO's headquarters are in Geneva.

### The four pillars of Decent Work are:

1. Fundamental principles and rights at work, and international labour standards
2. Employment and income opportunities
3. Social protection and social security
4. Social Dialogue (employers and trade unions) and tripartism (governments, employers and trade unions)

### Some key framework documents on decent work

- ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work
- ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization
- ILO Multilateral Framework on Labour Migration: Non-binding principles and guidelines for a rights-based approach to labour migration (2006)

### Core ILO Conventions on gender equality

- No. 183 – Maternity Protection Convention
- No. 156 – Workers and Family Responsibilities Convention
- No. 100 – Equal Remuneration Convention
- No. 111 – Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention

A full list of ILO Conventions and Recommendations that promote decent work and gender equality can be found in Appendix I.

The majority of countries worldwide have ratified ILO conventions on decent work. However, enforcement and implementation of the conventions is often slow. For further information on gender and the ILO's Decent Work Agenda: <http://www.ilo.org/gender>

### III THE TRADE UNION DEMAND FOR DECENT WORK FOR ALL

The trade union demand for Decent Work for All is the basis for just globalisation and the fair distribution of economic resources. Decent Work for All is fundamental to gender equality and to the 1.2 billion women in employment across the world.

Governments, trade unions, employers and international organisations need to ensure that rights to decent work, social protection and the social dialogue are progressed in this more unstable global economic environment. Trade unions have a vital role to play in ensuring that workers in the developing world have the solidarity of trade unions that have won rights to collective bargaining and decent work.

The majority of workers worldwide do not have decent work, living minimum wages, or rights to social protection, pensions and health care. Women in particular need decent work, social rights and protection as they are amongst the most vulnerable to discrimination, poverty, poor working conditions and precarious work. In many developing countries women work in sectors of the economy, for example, as domestic workers, care-givers and informal workers that do not have the protection of trade unions through the social dialogue and collective bargaining. Women experience multiple forms of discrimination in work, in education, and in the family.

Women continue to experience segregation into particular types of employment where they are more likely to be in part-time and temporary work. The continuing gender pay gap affects women in all countries across the world, but is the widest in the informal sector where many women in developing countries work. A study carried out by the ITUC (2009) of 300,000 women in 20 countries in 2009<sup>1</sup>, found that the global gender pay gap (the gap between women's and men's earnings) was on average 22%, but in some countries was as wide as 60%. The study found that membership of a trade union and the inclusion of women in collective bargaining was a significant factor in reducing the gender pay gap.

Although women's membership of trade unions has increased worldwide this has not always increased women's representation in decision-making and bargaining power (ETUC 2011). Increasingly unions and NGOs are organising women in areas of vulnerable employment in the service sector and in the informal sector.

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1 ITUC (2009) Gender (in)Equality in the Labour Market, ITUC

## International Confederation of Trade Unions (ITUC) Campaigns on Decent Work

### World Day for Decent Work

*Since 2008 ITUC has mobilised trade unions across the world through World Day for Decent Work. As ITUC says “This is the day for mobilisation all over the world: one day when all trade unions in the world stand up for decent work. Decent work must be at the centre of government actions to bring back economic growth and build a new global economy that puts people first”.*

For further information see ITUC World Day for Decent Work campaign website: <http://www.wddw.or/English>

### ITUC Decent Work, Decent Life for Women Campaign

*The ITUC’s global campaign Decent Work, Decent Life for Women aims to achieve equality at work and in trade unions. The campaign has two related objectives: i) to advocate for decent work for women and gender equality in policies and agreements, and ii) to seek gender equality in trade union policies structures, policies and activities and a significant increase in the number of women trade union members and women in elected positions.*

*The campaign was launched in 2008 and 102 affiliates in 64 countries are supporting the campaign. Events and marches have been organised around maternity protection rights, child care, pay equity, work-life balance, young women workers and gender equality in trade unions.*

For more information about the campaign and campaign tools: <http://www.ituc-csi.org>

### Global Union Federations

Global Union Federations (GUFs) seek to build international co-operation, joint action, and global solidarity among trade unions in different countries that share common employers. There is a growing global trade union recognition by multinational enterprises of GUFs at the headquarter levels, and beyond, and of the work that they do, as well as an important increase in social dialogue. In some cases, this interaction has resulted in the negotiation of International Framework Agreements, also known as Global Framework Agreements.

For further information: <http://www.global-unions.org>

## IV GLOBALISATION AND THE LIBERALISATION OF TRADE

Gains made in decent work in the developing world, however, are threatened by the global economic and financial crisis. For example, research by the International Metal Workers Federation found that 90% of affiliates had witnessed an increase in precarious work in the last five years, resulting in governments violating trade union rights. Alongside intensive global competition and the liberalisation of trade there has been a shift towards informal and precarious employment growth in the developing world. As previous economic downturns have shown women in the developing world working in export industries and agriculture are often hit the hardest with job losses and/or reduced incomes. The current economic crisis is no different regarding the severity of job losses for women in these sectors, while the livelihoods of many migrant women workers have also been hit badly by the global economic downturn.

The global expansion in trade and capital flows has resulted in an increasing rate of outsourcing of production from industrialised to low-wage countries and a parallel shift within developing countries from formal to informal sectors of the economy. Although this has provided opportunities for employment outside of agriculture a significant amount of women's employment in developing countries has become informal and home-based.

In many developing countries foreign direct investment, the creation of Export Processing Zones (predominantly factory work in the garment, footwear, cut flowers and small electronics industries) and global subcontracting and outsourcing have led to a rise in women's labour market participation. Jobs in Export Processing Zones are low paid and often take place in environments resembling sweatshops as manufacturers seek to drive down costs in global supply chains through a 'race to the bottom'. In this sector some of the biggest violations of trade union rights and decent work exist. Of concern to global trade unions is that decent work is side-stepped as multinational companies locate their production in Export Processing Zones precisely because they are exempted from some aspects of workplace regulation and workers' rights. Women in this sector have been particularly hard hit with job losses as a result of the global economic crisis as producers further seek to cut production and wage costs owing to fiercer competition and a reduced global demand for consumer goods (ITUC 2011). Women workers often earn piece rates and low wages in jobs with no security or social protection, and no rights for trade union representation. Organisations like Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), Homeworkers World Wide and HomeNet have pointed to the increase

in subcontracting of women home workers to replace core, full-time workers by multinational organisations.

*The United Nations Global Compact asks companies to adopt a set of ten universally accepted principles covering human rights, labour rights, environmental protection and anti-corruption. It is a global network involving UN agencies, companies, governments, employers' organisations, trade unions and NGOs. Trade unions that organise workers in global companies should find out if the company has adopted the ten principles of the Global Compact and to find out if they are applying these principles in subsidiaries in developing countries.*

It is rare that policies and international agreements on trade are analysed from a gender perspective and in relation to women's decent work. There are a number of tools that could be used for this, for example, using a gendered value chain analysis of how women and men benefit from the global value chain of production. Such an initiative has been developed by the German Development Cooperation and the ILO in the Ethiopian private sector (GTZ/ Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development 2008), alongside initiatives that assess the negative impact of trade on women's poverty reduction through gender aware Poverty and Social Impact Analysis.

## V THE GROWTH OF WOMEN'S PRECARIOUS AND VULNERABLE EMPLOYMENT

*Labour market data shows a boom of precarious and informal forms of work in virtually every country in the world. The "informalization" of work has become the most salient feature of all labour markets. Women are most affected by this process which forces millions of them to live with economic insecurity. Reversing the growth of insecure forms of work requires a shift away from the neo-liberal agenda that has prevailed since the 70's. It requires political courage and economic initiatives. The international trade union movement is ready to play its part.*

ITUC (2011) Living with economic insecurity: women in precarious work, page 23

More workers today are working in precarious employment where they have no right to join a trade union or bargain collectively with their employer. The alarming growth of precarious work in all regions of the world undermines the basis of international labour standards and minimum protections for workers. In 2009, of those in precarious work, 51% were women and 49% were men. More than three-quarters of workers in sub-Saharan Africa work in vulnerable employment and four out of every five workers earn less than \$2 a day. In 22 out of 27 countries where data was available women had a much higher share of vulnerable employment than men (ILO 2011). The “ILO Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization” agreed in 2008 provides a basis from which to address the impact of the growth of precarious work and to promote the employment relationship as a means to provide legal protection to workers.

### Informal workers

Informal workers have precarious livelihoods. They include own-account workers, unpaid family workers, home workers and wage workers who are employed in an informal way resulting in them falling outside the scope of labour laws and protections. There has been a dramatic rise in the number of informal workers in the developing world in the last decade or so. Around 75% of non-agricultural work in sub-Saharan Africa is informal and 51% in Latin America<sup>2</sup>.

In agriculture, which is the major form of employment of women in Africa and Latin America, women are equally affected by globalisation, liberalisation of trade and the economic crisis. For example, the shift in cash export crops has undermined women’s roles in subsistence food production, with consequences for the feeding and nutrition of their children and families. In India, Nigeria, Zambia and Uganda, for example, women are often unpaid family workers in export crop production, often resulting in women having a reduced share of household income.

*Women are denied equal access to land, credit, inputs, transport, extension services, technical assistance, and market opportunities and know-how. This prevents them from adopting new technologies or increasing their economies of scale. Productivity is constrained and their ability to switch into higher-return crops is severely limited.*

Self-Help Africa <http://www.selfhelpafrica.org/selfhelp/Main/ISSUES-Women.htm>

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2 GURN (2009) Moving from Precarious Employment to Decent Work, GURN Discussion Paper No.13

In 2008, two-thirds of employed women and men in sub-Saharan Africa worked in agriculture. In South Asia 70% of women workers worked in agriculture. Women carry out the majority of agricultural work in the developing world and yet have poor access to ownership of land, credit, transport and technical assistance. Across Africa, women carry out 90% of the work of processing food crops and providing household water and wood, and 80% of the work of food storage and transport from farm to village. In Kenya, women provide approximately 75% of total agricultural labour force. Self-Help Africa, the development NGO working with women in agriculture argue that agricultural output in sub-Saharan Africa could increase by 20% if women had access to the same resources as men. This is very important as a small increase in a woman's income can have a disproportionately greater impact on the health and wellbeing of her family.

Unlike workers in the formal sector, informal and home workers often do not have the protection of labour laws or social rights, and experience insecurity and low wages. In the ILO's review of maternity protection legislation in 167 countries found that the majority of countries had legislation in place. However, rights to maternity protection do not extend to informal workers and in many countries rights to maternity protection were very low or poorly implemented for women working in precarious work. Most rural women are unpaid family workers or are self-employed and are at risk of precarious work and low pay. On average rural women are paid 25% less than men and work long hours than men (ILO 2012).

Some countries have begun to put in place protections for informal workers an example of which is the Law of Protection of Workers Act introduced in Costa Rica to provide health and pension provision for informal workers. The trade union SEWA which organises 1.1 million poor, self-employed workers in India has developed an insurance programme, VimoSEWA to provide social protection covering health and accidents for workers and their families. NGOs have also been working to organise and establish rights for informal workers, including rights to decent work. Examples are PATAMABA in the Philippines, HomeNet, WIEGO and PSWS in Malaysia. An example is given below of the work of StreetNet International which organises street traders/vendors.

## StreetNet World Class Cities for All Campaign

*StreetNet International is an alliance of street vendors that was launched in Durban, South Africa, in 2002 to promote the rights of street vendors. It has members from trade unions and organisations working with street vendors. StreetNet has developed a Street Vendors' Manifesto based on the needs and concerns of street vendors and informal traders. International sporting events have become a focus for StreetNet International's campaigns. Sporting events have increasingly led to attacks on the rights of street vendors, many of whom are women, through the introduction of exclusion zones around sporting events, and evictions and harassment of vendors.*

*In 2006 StreetNet International, along with organisations working with the urban poor, launched the World Class Cities for All Campaign (WWCA). The campaign, which has a particular focus on gender, aimed to raise awareness during the FIFA World Cup in 2010 about the need to rethink urban planning and services and support the needs and interests of informal workers. A particular focus was given to protecting the rights of women who were the most likely to lose their livelihoods as street traders and be at risk of racism, sexual violence or trafficking.*

*In 2011 a campaign started in Brazil in advance of the 2012 FIFA World Cup. StreetNet has been working with trade unions in the municipal, transport, hotel and tourism, and building and construction sectors with a view to introducing systems for permits for informal traders, training programmes for traders in business skills and services such as child care and subsidised transport from shanty towns and improved economic security, including minimum income guarantees and health insurance.*

*The National Alliance of Street Vendors in India had World Class Cities for All Campaign, in advance of the Commonwealth Games held in New Delhi in September 2010. A progressive Government policy has been introduced on the licensing of street vendors, the establishment of town vending committees and social security for vendors. The campaign sought to protect the rights of the 300,000 street vendors work in the New Delhi area, many of whom are women.*

For further information about StreetNet International's activities and campaigns:

<http://www.streetnet.org.za/>

## Women migrant workers and decent work

Globalisation has had a major impact on international migration. More people migrate than ever before and migration is increasingly feminised. People migrate to seek better pay and working conditions and to escape poverty, persecution and conflict. Around 94.5 million migrant workers are women (UNFPA 2006) and women are 49% of all migrant workers (United Nations 2009). Women experience different patterns of migration than men, and have lower levels of access to economic and social resources. Significant numbers migrate to work as domestic workers and health care workers, in factories in Export Processing Zones and in low status work in catering, hotel and entertaining industries. Many do not have decent work. Many migrate alone and send remittances home for their children and families. In 2008 women remitted US\$ 328 billion globally.

The transnational movement of (mainly) women into care and domestic work in private households represents a new global phenomenon as the care needs of an ageing population grow in industrialised countries. And yet care needs have also grown in the developing world as more women in the poorest countries take on breadwinning roles and in the light of the care needs associated with HIV/AIDS.

Women migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to abuse, harassment and exploitation because they work in sectors where there is little protection of their rights. Women migrant workers are often subject to gender-based violence, for example, as domestic workers. Ensuring that migration is ethical is not only important to promoting decent work in countries of origin and destination, but also to challenging exploitation and trafficking for labour exploitation or sexual exploitation.

Trade unions across the world have been lobbying governments and international organisations to promote ethical migration and migration policies that contribute to decent work objectives. The ILO has a mandate to protect migrant workers through a strong multilateral governance mechanism that puts decent work at the heart of a rights based approach to migration (ILO 2006). Ethical recruitment principles have been established through bi-lateral agreements, for example, by National Health Service in the UK which aims to prevent recruitment of health workers from countries where migration will lead to a detrimental impact on levels of staffing and health services in poorer countries<sup>3</sup>. The code also includes for the provision of training and support to encourage health workers to work in their countries of origin. The global public services trade union federation the Public Services International (PSI) has a migration policy that promotes ethical recruitment principles and the European Federation of Public Service Unions has established a Voluntary Code of Practice with the hospital sector in the EU<sup>4</sup>.

3 The Department of Health Code of Practice for international recruitment of health care professionals in England and Wales (Department of Health 2004).

4 See PSI Policy Statement on International Migration with Particular Reference to Health Services [www.world-psi.org/migration](http://www.world-psi.org/migration) and EPSU-HOSPEEM code of conduct and follow up on Ethical Cross-Border Recruitment and Retention in the Hospital Sector <http://www.epsu.org/a/3715>

A gender-based analysis of migration is crucial to ensuring that migration policies take account of decent work, gender equality and the value of women's care work. Migration should also have a lasting and sustainable impact on economic and social development and poverty reduction in the developing world.

### Public Services International programme on the international migration of women health and social care workers

*The Public Service International (PSI), the global union federation for public service unions, represents 20 million workers in 650 unions in 148 countries. The PSI programme on the International Migration of Women Health and Social Care Workers has carried out peer-led trade union research to show how health and social care workers are affected by migration from poor countries in the global South. The research was carried out with affiliated unions in Ghana, Kenya, South Africa, the Philippines and Australia.*

*The research found that 98% of those interviewed believed that there was inadequate staffing and resources to provide quality healthcare; 83% did not have opportunities for career development and 82% did not have decent working conditions. Many migrant health workers are deskilled when they migrate, and experiences of exploitation, low pay, racism and discrimination are not uncommon. PSI is campaigning for decent work and pay, better support and representation for migrant healthcare workers, collective bargaining to promote the rights of migrant workers, access to rights to social protection and to engage in ethical recruitment policies and practices.*

For further information about the PSI's migration programme:

[www.psi-world.org/en/issue/migration](http://www.psi-world.org/en/issue/migration)

### Domestic workers

Domestic workers are among the most exploited workers globally. Many domestic workers are migrant women who come from poor communities and from rural areas. They frequently experience exploitation, abuse, isolation and low wages, and have limited recourse to legal rights to employment protection. Trade unions are playing an increasingly important role in organising domestic workers and protecting their rights. An example of this is the SIPTU support group for domestic workers, established to provide information, protection and support for domestic workers in Ireland.

Changes in household and family formation and the growth of dual-income households, as well as an ageing population, has resulted in a significant increase in care work and domestic work. In Latin America, 17% of employed women are domestic workers, 9% of employed women in South Africa and 9.5% of employed women in the Philippines.

After many years of lobbying by trade unions and NGOs, in 2011 the ILO agreed a Convention on Decent Work for Domestic Workers<sup>5</sup>. The Convention states that “Each Member shall take measures to ensure the effective promotion and protection of the human rights of all domestic workers”. This covers freedom of association and collective bargaining, the elimination all forms of forced or compulsory labour, the effective abolition of child labour, and the elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation. Measures should be taken to ensure that domestic workers have protection against all forms of abuse, violence and harassment (Article 5) and to ensure that domestic workers, like all workers, enjoy fair terms of employment and decent working conditions (Article 6), that domestic workers are informed of their terms and conditions of employment, including written contracts of employment in accordance with national laws and collective agreements (Articles 7 and 8).

### Women’s unpaid work and unpaid care work

Although globally women’s participation in paid work arising from globalisation has increased significantly, women’s participation in paid work and decent work continues to be affected by the burden of combining family/reproductive work with paid work. Women are the main providers of care for children, older people and people who are sick or disabled. The double burden of work and care/family responsibilities makes it much harder for women to gain access to decent work. Women and girls in low income countries carry out a disproportionate amount of unpaid work and unpaid care (SIDA 2010). When women’s unpaid and paid working hours are combined women have longer working weeks than men. If women are both ‘time poor’ and ‘money poor’ they will have fewer choices about employment and opportunities for education and training. Access to subsidised child care and maternity protection are not always available in the poorest countries and to the poorest women.

Trade union demands on the reconciliation of work and care have sought to change the way that the workplace is organised so that flexible working practices do not sacrifice job security for part-time workers and workers on fixed-term contracts (ETUC 2005). By bringing women’s time into collective bargaining traditional bargaining practices around the family wage, reconciling women’s paid and unpaid work have been challenged.

The low value given to care and to women’s unpaid work has led to calls for the value of women’s unpaid work to be calculated and factored into GNP data (Power 2004, Waring 1988). Feminist economists have taken account of women’s unpaid work by using the concept of “social

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5 For further information: refer to the text of the ILO Convention on Domestic Workers [http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/100thSession/reports/provisional-records/WCMS\\_157836/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/100thSession/reports/provisional-records/WCMS_157836/lang-en/index.htm) and [http://www.ilo.org/actrav/areas/WCMS\\_DOC\\_ATR\\_ARE\\_DOM\\_EN/lang-en/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/actrav/areas/WCMS_DOC_ATR_ARE_DOM_EN/lang-en/index.htm). See also ITUC flyer: Decent work, decent life for domestic workers (setting out the ITUC’s demands in their campaign for the ILO Convention on Domestic Workers).

provisioning” of human life (Ferber & Nelson 1993 and 2003). This means that women’s unpaid work – such as food, water and fuel collection, agricultural work, household work and unpaid care work of children, older people and sick and disabled family members – becomes part of GDP data. This can also lead to the development of indicators on the reduction of unpaid care work through the expansion of childcare provision and health and social services for women. This is very important to reducing the burden of unpaid work and in providing opportunities for women to enter decent work. One innovative way to value care work is through the use of Gender Responsive Budgeting, which is a mechanism to assess government spending on women and men, so that it takes account of factors such as women’s burden of unpaid care work (Budlender and Hewitt 2003).

This is important to the decent work agenda and to understanding what shapes women’s and men’s employment patterns, which traditionally have not taken account of women’s paid and unpaid labour. As a result macro-economic policies, economic and social development strategies and employment policies, which are not always gender-neutral, need to address how social policies, family policies and working time policies either constrain or facilitate equal access to employment and decent work for women. Social norms that underpin family and kinship obligations and religious and cultural practices also need to be factored into an understanding of women’s roles and the controls that exist within the family, for example, around women’s access to education, employment and birth control. It is important, therefore, that macro-economic policies and development strategies address the different factors that shape women’s and men’s access to decent work.

### Ethical trade and fair trade: an approach to achieving decent work

Ethical and fair trading is integral to decent work for women. This issue was the subject of ICTU’s Ethical consumer guide. Initiatives such as the Ethical Trading Initiative, an alliance of trade unions, NGOs and companies, have worked in partnership to improve the lives of poor and vulnerable people who make or grow consumer goods. They have a vision to ensure that workers are free from exploitation and discrimination and work in conditions of freedom, security and equity. Retailers, brands and their suppliers are encouraged to improve the working conditions of the people who make the products they sell. In many cases production is outsourced to supplier companies in countries around the world that have inadequate protections and rights for workers. For further information: <http://ethicaltrade.org>. Similarly, fair trade labelling, using the FAIRTRADE MARK operates in both Ireland and the UK and seeks to promote sustainable livelihoods and decent work for farmers and workers in the developing world. This offers an alternative to conventional trade, which often discriminates against the poorest and weakest producers. The FAIRTRADE mark is the only certification process that has a specific aim to tackle poverty and empower producers in the developing world. See for example for example, by the UK Fairtrade Foundation <http://fairtrade.org.uk> and Fairtrade Ireland [www.fairtrade.ie](http://www.fairtrade.ie).

## VI ADDRESSING WOMEN'S PRECARIOUS AND INFORMAL WORK IN THE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CRISIS

*The current crisis should be viewed as an opportunity to shape new gender equality policy responses.*

ILO Global Jobs Pact, 2009

In the light of the severity of the global economic crisis and the devastating impact on rights to decent work, the 2009 International Labour Conference passed a resolution on bringing gender equality at the heart of the decent work agenda. This was argued to be more urgent in that:

*...the current crisis is having serious effects with enterprises closing and workers losing their jobs. Recovery packages during economic crises need to take into account the impact on women and men and integrate gender concerns in all measures. These measures should be consistent with the long-term objectives of sustainable economic, social and environmental development, including gender equality. In all discussions on recovery packages, both regarding their design and assessing their success, women must have an equal voice with men.*

According to research carried out by the ITUC (2011) the devastating impact of the economic crisis has accelerated the rapid increase in the informalisation of work in many developing countries. Widening gender inequalities result from the fact that women are overrepresented in insecure forms of work. ITUC makes “an urgent call to governments to shine the light on the poor quality of the jobs that women hold” and particularly because a disproportionate number of job losses are experienced by the poorest and most vulnerable workers, the majority of who are women. ITUC recommends that there needs to be a gender perspective of the global economic crisis and for specific measures that would help women to move out of informal and precarious work and have access to decent work. The four key recommendations are:

- Making a shift in focus from job creation per se to the creation of quality jobs;
- Implement decent work and gender equality measures in the labour market;
- Provide universal access to social security and social protection for all workers regardless of their employment situation;
- A challenge to unions to recruit and organise workers in insecure forms of work.

In addition the ITUC and Global Unions are campaigning for governments to reduce temporary and contract work to cases of genuine need, guarantee equal pay for precarious workers, the right for precarious workers to join a trade union and for long-term temporary jobs to be converted to permanent jobs.



# 3 GENDER EQUALITY AND THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

## I INTRODUCTION

In 2000, 189 governments across the world signed up to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) setting out a vision for economic and social development, equality and justice. Each of the eight MDGs is broken down into targets and detailed indicators, and there is an intention that gender equality is integrated into all of the MDGs since they all have gender implications.

Gender equality and advancing women's rights are centrally important to achieving the MDGs and Decent Work for All. For example, if poverty and hunger are to be reduced (MDG 1) it is vital that women have access to decent work, and to secure and independent economic livelihoods. If girls are unable to attend school because of poverty they will not gain the literacy or skills required to lift them out of poverty and provide them with alternatives to informal and precarious work (MDG 2). This is also relevant if women are to achieve economic empowerment and access to decision-making at all levels (MDG 3). Decent work as an explicit goal has a relatively low profile in the MDGs. This has implications for how decent work for women is approached in the development strategies adopted by governments and through aid programmes to the poorest countries. Although there is no specific MDG on decent work, which trade unions had called for in 2000, decent work is referred to as a target in relation to poverty alleviation.

Because women are the poorest in the world, it is argued that the MDGs put women's poverty at the centre of the international development agenda (Floro & Meurs 2009, United Nations 2011a and 2011b). The increasing rate of poverty amongst the working poor in developing countries also points to the need for decent work to be core strategy, rather than employment creation alone to be a route out of poverty. The MDGs also provide a development framework to ensure that women have access to social justice and can claim their legal rights. Legal rights and access to justice are also at centre for the achievement of gender equality in relation to freedom from exploitation and gender based violence, equality in the family and the household, access to economic resources and financial independence, and in having rights to decent work (United Nations 2011b).

The reality is that persistent poverty and gender inequalities, along with the global economic crisis, have made it difficult to fully achieve the MDGs. Women and girls, particularly the most excluded and disadvantaged, have not equally shared the progress made in achieving the MDGs and in practice gender equality objectives and goals are not properly integrated into country and international development strategies designed to meet the MDGs.

The absence of specific targets and indicators on gender equality and particularly on women's access to decent work in the MDGs continues to be a major obstacle to achieving gender equality and to addressing the more recent consequences of the economic crisis on women's livelihoods in the poorest countries. This is now of critical importance as the global economic

crisis has disproportionately hit women in the developing world. The danger is that much of the progress made in working towards achieving the MDGs could be slowed down or lost altogether, with dire consequences for the poorest and most disadvantaged women.

In the light of the poor progress in achieving gender equality the 2010 High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly of the Millennium Development Goals made a call for collective action to address gender inequalities and a renewed effort to provide equal access by women and girls to education, basic services, health care, economic opportunities and decision-making at all levels on the basis that “achievement of the MDGs depends largely on women’s empowerment” (United Nations 2011a).

## II OVERVIEW OF GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT UNDER THE MDGs

A brief description of each of the eight Millennium Development Goals follows, with specific reference to progress made on gender equality, decent work and the impact of the global economic crisis under each Goal.

### MDG 1: ERADICATE EXTREME HUNGER AND POVERTY

- MDG 1 calls for the ending of extreme poverty and hunger by a) halving the numbers of people who live on \$1 a day; b) achieving full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people; c) halving the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

*For millions in the world today, jobs provide little relief from poverty because their pay is so low...for the most part, women are more likely than men to be in vulnerable employment situations.*

United Nations (2008) The Millennium Development Goals Report, p.18

### Poverty reduction

Globally rates of poverty in the developing world have declined, although the rate of decline has been sharply affected by the global economic and food crisis. The World Bank predicts that by 2015 poverty will fall to below 15%, exceeding the 23% target. However, it is important to point out that this is largely as a result of economic development in India and China, masking persistent high rates of poverty and hunger in other parts of the developing world (United Nations 2011a).

By 2005, 1.4 billion people were living on less than \$1.25 a day (a fall from 1.8 billion in 1990) and this is predicted to fall to below 900 million by 2015 (United Nations 2011a). Irish Aid (2010) reports that in the countries that it provides development cooperation to have seen a marked reduction in poverty up to 2010. For example, in Uganda, the percentage of people

living in poverty has been reduced from 56% in 1992 to 23.3% in 2009. In Zambia, by the end of 2010, 54,000 of the poorest households were benefitting from the new Government's social protection programme which aims to reach 69,000 households by 2016. In Malawi, stunted growth development of children caused by malnutrition fell from 46% in 2006 to 40% in 2009, reflecting some small improvements in the availability of food and changes in dietary practices.

Women still account for two-thirds of the world's poor. Household surveys in Latin America and the Caribbean show that 110 women compared to every 100 men live in poor households. In sub-Saharan Africa there are 120 women compared to every 100 men living in poor households. This does not take account of the unequal distribution of resources within households.

### Extreme hunger

Around 16% of people in the developing world go hungry. The economic crisis and the food crisis mean that the target to reduce extreme hunger will not be met by 2015. Sub-Saharan Africa is most affected.

### The impact of the global financial crisis on poverty and hunger

Despite the overall trends in the last decade to reduce extreme poverty and hunger, the United Nations warns that the global economic crisis has slowed down progress in achieving the poverty reduction target. Even where progress has been made in reducing poverty, women and girls continue to bear a disproportionate burden of extreme poverty and hunger.

The global economic crisis is having a devastating impact on women's livelihoods. Women are particularly vulnerable as they work in the least secure and most precarious work:

- The deterioration in the labour market has resulted in a decline in employment and workers being forced into vulnerable employment, resulting in more workers and their families living in extreme poverty.
- The global economic crisis has resulted in an alarming rise in unemployment in the developing world. In 2010, 87 million women were unemployed across the world (up from 76 million in 2006). The employment-to-population ratio declined from 56.8% in 2007 to 54.8% in 2010, revealing significant problems in improving employment for the working age population.
- The global food and financial crisis has led to significant increases in the price of rice, wheat and maize since 2008 and to a dramatic rise in the numbers of people going hungry. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) 906 million people were undernourished in 2010 (up from 827 million people in 1992). As a result progress to reducing hunger has been halted in most poor regions. One in four children living in developing countries today is underweight and the proportions are much higher in rural areas.

- By the end of 2010, over 43 million people had been uprooted by conflict or persecution, resulting in extreme hardship, poverty and hunger. Around 15.4 million are refugees – 10.5 million of whom fall under the responsibility of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and 4.8 million Palestinian refugees are the responsibility of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). A further 27.5 million people who have been uprooted by violence and persecution remain within the borders of their own countries. Aside from refugees under the UNRWA's mandate, an estimated 7.2 million refugees in 24 countries are confined to camps and other settlements with no immediate solution to their plight in sight. Women and girls are particularly vulnerable to harassment and sexual abuse as refugees.

#### Women's employment and the working poor

As mentioned in the previous section the global economic crisis has resulted in a marked increase in poverty amongst the working poor and in the numbers of workers in sub-Saharan Africa and Western Asia in vulnerable employment (defined as own-account and unpaid family workers) (United Nations 2011a). One in five workers and their families living in extreme poverty (living on less than \$1.25 per day) in 2009 (ILO 2009). This amounts to an increase of 40 million people who are working poor in 2009 (United Nations 2011a).

Women predominate in the numbers who are working poor. They are much more likely than men to work in the informal sector of the economy and in precarious work that is unregulated and insecure, offering no rights to decent work and protection against exploitation, low wages and poor working conditions. In developing countries women in rural areas are responsible for 60–80% of food production and yet they have little control over land, property, credit or other assets. In South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa the majority of women work as farm workers, many in subsistence farming.

Women across the world carry out more unpaid work than men and are the main care-givers for families and older people. This has a negative impact on their health and well-being, their participation in work and in education. Recognising the value of women's care roles and unpaid work to the economy is crucial and yet this is rarely taken into account in development strategies.

#### MDG2: ACHIEVE UNIVERSAL PRIMARY EDUCATION

- **MDG 2 sets a target for all children to have access to primary education and that by 2015 all girls and boys will be able to complete a full course of primary education.**

*Being poor, female or living in a conflict zone increases the probability that a child will be out of school.*

United Nations (2011) Millennium Development Goals Report 2011, page 5

Universal access to primary education for girls is essential for women's empowerment and gender equality. Despite progress made in achieving universal primary education by 2015, the United Nations (2011a) states that it is unlikely that the goal of universal primary education will be achieved, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

The participation of children in primary school education has increased in all developing countries (with the numbers of children out of school declining from 106 million in 1999 to 67 million in 2009). Across all developing countries 96 girls for every 100 boys were enrolled in primary school education, compared to 91 girls for every 100 boys enrolled in 1999 (United Nations 2011a). In sub-Saharan Africa 78% of girls and 80% of boys are now enrolled in primary school education, showing a marked increase in the last decade, representing 33% between 2000 and 2008 (United Nations 2011a). In Mozambique, the number of children attending school has grown from 400,000 in 1992 to almost 7 million. In Tanzania, over 118,000 students were in tertiary education for the 2009/10 academic year, an increase of 24% over the previous year (Irish Aid 2010).

Despite these improvements girls are less likely to complete primary school education. In North Africa and the Middle East, for example, one in four young women had less than four years of schooling, compared to one in eight of young men (United Nations 2008).

### **MDG 3: PROMOTE GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWER WOMEN**

- **MDG 3 makes a commitment to “promote gender equality and empower women”. It covers women's access to education at all levels, women's employment outside of the agricultural sector and women's representation in national politics. It covers the elimination of gender disparity in primary and secondary education (Target 3a).**

Gender equality is vital to social and economic development, to the quality of life and development of communities, to creating high quality jobs and workplaces that value the skills and potential of women and to ensuring that there is balanced decision-making.

*Wide gaps remain in women's access to paid work in at least half of all regions. Following significant job losses in 2008–2009, the growth of employment during the economic recovery in 2010, especially in the developing world was lower for women than men. Women employed in manufacturing industries were especially hit hard.*

United Nations (2011) Millennium Development Goals Report 2011, page 5

#### Women's access to decent work

As the previous section showed women's access to decent work has worsened as a consequence of the global economic crisis. The global economic crisis has reduced opportunities for women to move out of agriculture into other forms of employment and it is unlikely that the gap between women's and men's unemployment will narrow in the immediate future (United Nations 2011). Globally, 53% of all women work in vulnerable employment. In sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia this rises to more than 80%.

In developing countries 40% of women participated in waged employment outside of agriculture in 2009, an increase from 35% from 1990. In sub-Saharan Africa there are few opportunities for women to work outside of agriculture and in North Africa and Western Asia less than one in five paid jobs outside of the agricultural sector are held by women.

#### Women's representation in national parliaments

Although women's representation in national parliaments has increased, globally women only represent 1 in 5 members of national parliaments. Along with MDG 3 the Beijing Platform for Action called for gender balance in government decision-making and political bodies. In Rwanda women are 56.3% of the national parliament, women are 44.5% of the national parliament in South Africa and 43.2% of the national parliament in Cuba. Overall the proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments in sub-Saharan Africa has risen from 13% to 20% since 2000 (Irish Aid 2010). However, 48 countries have less than 10% women members of their parliaments and nine countries have no women parliamentarians at all (Belize, the Federated States of Micronesia, Nauru, Oman, Palau, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Solomon Islands and Tuvalu (United Nations 2011a). Those countries that have seen a large increase in women's representation in politics have also seen parallel improvements in women's legal rights (United Nations 2011b).

#### Participation of girls in secondary education

In 2009, 96 girls for every 100 boys were enrolled in secondary education in 2009 (up from 88 girls for every 100 boys in 1999). However, access to secondary and tertiary education for girls, and particularly older girls, continues to be hampered by poverty.

It is essential that gender is at the centre of all efforts to achieve the MDGs. Trade unions, governments and civil society organisations have a responsibility to make sure that gender equality is part of all eight MDGs. This can be achieved through a gender mainstreaming approach so that policies and programmes integrate gender considerations at all stages. Irish Aid, for example, has developed a policy on gender mainstreaming. It is essential that this is fully implemented in coming years so that gender is integrated into all aspects of development cooperation.

## MDG4: REDUCE CHILD MORTALITY

- MDG 4 sets a target to reduce under-five child mortality by two-thirds by 2015.

In all developing regions a mother's education is the most important factor in determining whether her child will live beyond five. Access to affordable and quality health care, decent work and welfare services are crucial to this.

Improvements in child mortality are evident in many developing countries. Overall, there has been more than a third reduction in the numbers of children dying under the age of five years since 1990, a decline from 12.4 million in 1990 to 8.1 million in 2009 (2011a). The biggest decline has been found in North Africa where the under-five mortality declined by 68% and by 58% in Eastern Asia. In Ethiopia, Malawi and Mozambique, the under-five child mortality rate has fallen by at least 40% since 1990. In Malawi, the fall was by 56% (Irish Aid 2010).

However, these figures should not mask the fact that children living in the poorest households are much more vulnerable to ill-health, disease and death. Children from the poorest households are up to three times more likely to die before the age of five than children from the richest households. Furthermore, the reduction in child deaths is not taking place at a sufficiently fast rate to meet the MDG target. Millions of child deaths could be prevented through investment in quality public health care services, access to clean water and sanitation and improved nutrition. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, diarrhoea, malaria and pneumonia are responsible for more than half of all deaths of children during the first 28 days after their birth (United Nations 2011a). The 78% reduction in measles worldwide through improved immunisation is, according to the United Nations "in jeopardy" in the light of reduced resources for immunisation and evidence of new outbreaks of the disease in many developing countries.

In 1990 an estimated 100 million women were 'missing' in Asia as a result of prenatal sex selection, infanticide and neglect in countries where traditionally sons are preferred to daughters (United Nations 2011b). There is also evidence of a rise in prenatal sex selection in some countries. Investments in girls' education and women's decent work are crucial to ending the culture that results in discriminatory perception that daughters are a financial burden.

## MDG 5: IMPROVE MATERNAL HEALTH

- MDG 5 sets a target to reduce maternal mortality rates by three-quarters and achieve universal access to reproductive health by 2015.

*[Improvements in maternal and child health] will contribute to reduced poverty, greater gender equality and the empowerment of women by improving the chances that these young women will go to school and engage in paid employment.*

United Nations Millennium Development Goals Report 2011, page 34

Increasing resources for quality health care, providing access to affordable health and reproductive care services and ending user-fees for health care are important preconditions for gender equality and for improving maternal health and well-being. They are a fundamental basis for gender equality, women's participation in and access to decent work, well-being and health.

#### Maternal deaths

An estimated 359,000 women died in pregnancy and childbirth in 2009, the majority of which could be prevented. There has been only a small decrease in maternal deaths since 1990 and only 14 countries so far are on target to meet MDG 5. To achieve the goal of reducing maternal mortality there needs to be a 5.5% reduction each year; yet there has only been a decrease of 2.3% since 1990 (United Nations 2008). Irish Aid notes some of the progress made in the countries that it supports. For example, in Timor Leste maternal mortality decreased from 660 to 557 deaths per 100,000 births between 2000 and 2010. In Tanzania, maternal mortality declined by 21% between 2005 and 2010, and in Mozambique, maternal mortality rates fell by two thirds between 1990 and 2008 (Irish Aid 2010).

Around 70% of maternal deaths could be prevented if women had better access to maternal and reproductive health care services. With only one in three women in developing countries receiving recommended ante-natal care during pregnancy, many of the poorest women are unable to afford or have access to these services and die unnecessarily. In rural areas women experience higher risks of maternal death simply because there are no services available to them. In Bangladesh and Nepal only about 5% of women living in rural areas have access to a skilled birth attendant. In Indonesia, for example, the government's programme of a 'midwife in every village' programme has resulted in 54,000 midwives being trained in seven years.

#### Access to family planning

Access to family planning is also a key issue. In sub-Saharan Africa only one in four women of child bearing ages has access to contraception. Despite this, aid programmes for family planning were reduced from 8.2% to 3.2% between 2000 and 2008. The United Nations reports that inadequate funding for planning is a major failure in fulfilling the commitment to improve women's reproductive health (United Nations 2011a).

## MDG 6: COMBAT HIV/AIDS, MALARIA AND OTHER DISEASES

- MDG 6 has a goal to halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015; to achieve universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS by 2012 and to halt and begin to reverse the spread of malaria and other major diseases by 2012

There has been stabilization in most countries of the spread of HIV. New HIV infection rates have declined by 21% since 1997, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa owing to improvements in prevention and treatment (Irish Aid 2010). However, 33.3 million people live with HIV/AIDS globally (United Nations 2008).

In developing countries, of those living with HIV/AIDS, 53% are women and there is evidence of the link between gender-based violence and HIV (United Nations 2011b). Nearly 80% of women living with HIV/AIDS live in sub-Saharan Africa. Although access to antiretroviral treatment has increased in the last decade, only 35% of those who need it have access to treatment. Poverty and unequal power relations between women and men in the family increase the risk of women contracting HIV/AIDS, and particularly because of women's vulnerability to physical and sexual abuse.

Tuberculosis and malaria are the next leading killers after HIV. There has been a dramatic increase in the production and use of insecticide-treated mosquito nets, although poverty continues to be a barrier in access to mosquito nets and the prevalence of tuberculosis has declined in most regions, although slowly. Deaths from malaria have been reduced by 20% worldwide, especially in Africa, through the collaborative efforts of governments, international donors and civil society (Irish Aid 2010). There has been a 78% drop in deaths as a result of measles worldwide since 2000, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, due to improved immunization (United Nations 2011a).

## MDG 7: ENSURE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

- MDG 7 has a goal that the principles of sustainable development and loss of environmental resources are included in country policies and programmes; to reduce loss of biodiversity; to halve the numbers of people who do not have access to safe drinking water and sanitation; and to improve the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers.

Although the MDGs were drawn up before the impact of climate change was more widely known, climate change has a major impact on women's lives. Women have been the most affected by weather-related disasters and carry out the bulk of agricultural work. However, few programmes specifically target women's skills and roles in sustainable development.

The United Nations (2011a) reports that despite a decrease in the rate of deforestation this remains alarmingly high and that the target for biodiversity conservation was not reached by 2010, with potentially grave consequences. The target on drinking water is, however, likely to be reached, although an estimated 1 in 10 people will not have access to drinking water by 2015. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa the number of people using an improved drinking water source almost doubled, from 252 million in 1990 to 492 million in 2008. In Tigray in the north

of Ethiopia, crop productivity has improved by nearly 70%, and irrigated land has increased by 300%. In Tanzania, land under irrigation has increased by over 40% since 2006 (Irish Aid 2010). Despite this progress access to safe drinking water remains a significant challenge and 2.6 billion people still lack access to flush toilets and other forms of sanitation (United Nations 2011a). Slum improvements are not keeping pace with the growing rates of the urbanisation; this is particularly the case in sub-Saharan Africa and countries affected by conflict.

## **MDG 8: DEVELOP A GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR DEVELOPMENT**

- **MDG 8 has a goal to achieve rule-based and non-discriminatory financial and trading systems; to address the needs of the least developed countries, landlocked countries and small island developing countries; deal comprehensively with debt problems of developing countries; provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries and make new technology available.**

Globally overseas development aid has continued to rise, although at a much slower pace in the last three years, reaching \$126 billion per year in 2010. However, only five countries have achieved the United Nations target of 0.7% of gross national income to be spent on aid (Denmark, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden).

According to the OECD (2011) aid will grow by only 2% a year between 2011 and 2013, compared to the much larger increase of 8% each year over the last three years. Of the total of \$92.1 billion of overseas development aid in 2008–2009, just \$23.1 billion had a specific focus on support for gender equality and women's empowerment. Given that women in developing countries shoulder the burden of poverty, have the poorest access to education at all levels and in the light of widening inequalities, a renewed effort and focus is urgently needed to address these inequalities.

Overseas aid has a major role to play in the global partnership for development. An example of Ireland's involvement is the GAVI Alliance (Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization), a public-private global health partnership of the WHO, UNICEF and the World Bank and international donors such as Ireland. Since its launch in 2000, the GAVI Alliance has helped to prevent over 1.7 million deaths through improved immunisation and innovative immunisation technologies (Irish Aid 2010).

### III GENDER EQUALITY AND A RENEWED EFFORT TO ACHIEVE THE MDGs

The poor progress in achieving gender equality and the relatively low level of funding dedicated to gender equality initiatives to meet the MDGs has led to a call for a renewed effort to integrate gender equality into the MDGs. Helen Clark, the former Prime Minister of New Zealand, now Head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) said in 2010 that:

*I believe that investing in women and girls in itself constitutes a breakthrough strategy for achieving the MDGs, and that almost any investment we make in women and girls will have a multiplier effect across the MDGs.*

Her call, and the calls of trade unions, NGOs and development cooperation organisations across the world to put in place a renewed effort and concerted strategy on gender equality, arose because of evidence of lack of progress on gender equality and renegeing of political commitments made. The OECD's Development Cooperation Directorate's (2010) also established a strategy for gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls in order to achieve the MDGs by 2015. Four key areas are seen as being essential for accelerating progress to meet the MDGs by 2015:

- Ensure that financial assets are in the hands of women, through women's economic participation and their ownership and control of productive assets.
- Keep girls in school, as this will provide women with better economic livelihoods and economic independence.
- Improve reproductive health and access to family planning, by reversing the decline in funding for family planning making access to reproductive health care a priority.
- Support women's leadership by ensuring that women are agents of change in their families, communities and countries, and by increasing women's voice and participation on national politics.

In 2011 the fourth High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness recognised the importance of integrating gender equality into aid programmes and to monitor progress on gender equality:

*We must accelerate our efforts to achieve gender equality and the empowerment of women through development programmes in country priorities, recognising that gender equality and women's empowerment are critical to achieving development results. Reducing gender inequality is both an end in its own right and a prerequisite for sustainable and inclusive growth. (4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness: Busan Partnership for Development Co-operation, 2011:5)*

Specific recommendations were made to enhance the collection, dissemination and harmonisation of data disaggregated by sex in informing policy, investment and expenditure to the benefit of women and men; integrate targets for gender equality and women's empowerment in accountability mechanisms, and address gender equality and women's empowerment in all aspects of development work, peace building and state building.

With three years to go before the deadline for achieving the MDGs there is an urgent need for action to implement these recommendations. Trade unions have a vital role to play in pressurising governments and international agencies to fulfil these commitments.

## IV OTHER INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS TO GENDER EQUALITY

Along with a commitment to support the MDGs, Ireland is signed up to a number of International commitments on gender equality. The two most important are:

- Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (ratified by Ireland in 1985)
- The Beijing Platform for Action agreed at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on women (1995).

### Beijing Platform for Action

The Beijing Platform for Act was agreed at the Fourth World Women's Conference held in 1995. The Platform for Action contains twelve strategic objectives covering poverty, education and training, health, violence against women, women in armed conflict, economy, power and decision-making, institutional mechanism for the advancement of women, human rights, media, environment and the girl-child. A major breakthrough took place on the basis that women's human rights included the right for women to have control over sexual and reproductive health and to be free from violence and discrimination.

The Beijing Platform for Action established the principle of gender mainstreaming so that a gender perspective is integrated into all legislation and policies. It also established the requirement for gender-disaggregated data to reflect the problems and issues related to women and men in society. On this basis governments were required to "Seek to ensure that before policy decisions are taken, an analysis of their impact on women and men, respectively, is carried out" (para 204).

## Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)

CEDAW was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 and sets out the principle of equality between women and men in legislation, systems for legal recourse to protect women from discrimination and the elimination of all acts of discrimination by persons, organisations or enterprises. As a signatory to CEDAW the Irish government is legally bound to implement CEDAW and is required to report to CEDAW on a periodic basis.

For further information on CEDAW and the Beijing Platform for Action:

<http://www.un.org/women>

## V IRISH AID, DECENT WORK AND GENDER EQUALITY

*Aid is only effective if it achieves good development results and good development results are not possible if gender inequalities persist, environmental damage is accepted or human rights are abused.*

Mary Robinson, speaking at ‘Strengthening the Development Results and Impacts of the Paris Declaration through Work on Gender Equality, Social Exclusion and Human Rights’, London, March 2008

Irish overseas development aid is the responsibility of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs (currently held by Eamon Gilmore, Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs & Trade). Irish Aid was established in 1974 to coordinate development cooperation across government departments and through an Inter-departmental Committee on Development. The main focus of development aid is poverty reduction. Decent work is referred to in the Millennium Development Goal policy and there is a specific focus on fair trade, employment and fair incomes as part of the poverty reduction strategy.

However, Ireland’s overseas aid budget was reduced to 0.54% of Gross National Income in 2009. Ireland has pledged to spend, before 2015, 0.7% of national income, or 70 cents out of every €100, on overseas aid. Ireland’s aid budget currently stands at €639 million, or 0.5% of GNI – a fall of over 30% since 2008. Of interest is that an opinion poll carried out by Dóchas (the NGO platform for development organisations supported by Irish Aid) found that 85% of people rated overseas aid as “important” or “very important”; 88% stated that Ireland should be proud of its reputation as an international aid donor. The “Act Now on 2015” campaign, which ICTU is a member, has been launched to keep the pressure on the government to keep to its commitment to spend 0.7% of its national income before 2015.

Irish Aid has four cross-cutting areas of activity which include:

- Gender equality and a specific focus on women's empowerment
- Governance and a focus on the role of civil society
- HIV/AIDS
- Environmental sustainability

Around 80% of overseas development aid is targeted to countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Aid is targeted to support the development strategies and poverty reduction strategies of nine countries (Ethiopia, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Vietnam and East Timor) which are governed by individual Country Strategy Plans. Irish Aid also has programmes in South Africa, Palestine, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Zimbabwe.

Decent work is not a specific objective of these programmes, for example, none of the development strategies and poverty reduction strategies in the nine core countries that Irish Aid cooperates with refer specifically to decent work. However, decent work is often included as part of the support to civil society in areas such as social protection or employment creation. Irish Aid's work also has a specific focus on supporting the involvement and participation in civil society organisations through country programmes and multilateral cooperation.

In addition to bilateral cooperation the government also participates in and provides funding to support multilateral cooperation through UNICEF, UNHCHR, UNDP and the ILO. Specific programmes are supported through technical cooperation, which often include decent work objectives, for example, through the ILO Partnership Programme and special programmes, which includes actions on women's entrepreneurship, employment opportunities for people with disabilities and programmes on forced labour and child labour.

#### Irish Aid's cooperation on gender equality

*Addressing gender inequality is about implementing the fundamental right to equality. It is also essential to effective poverty reduction.*

White Paper on Irish Aid

Irish Aid has a commitment to ensure that gender is mainstreamed into development aid and poverty reduction strategies. In 2004 Irish Aid drew up a Gender Equality Policy which has three objectives: a) To advance equal rights for women and men, b) to eliminate gender based inequalities in access to, control of and benefit from resources and services, c) to support women's equal participation with men in political and economic decision-making.

Irish Aid's core policy goal on gender has the objective: "to support the achievement of gender equality as an essential component of sustainable human development". Examples of specific support on gender equality, contained in the Irish Aid annual report for 2010, include:

- Support to governments in responding to gender-based violence (GBV). For example, in Timor Leste support was given to the development of a network of local services for survivors of GBV.
- Provision of emergency obstetric and neo-natal care In the Kenema District of Sierra Leone was provided by Irish Aid funds and the International Rescue Committee, which supports the delivery of emergency obstetric and neo-natal care. The percentage of births attended by skilled personnel increased from 25% in 2009 to 54% in 2010.
- In Zambia, €13.8 million was allocated by Irish Aid to the Ministry of Education to improve girls' enrolment rates in primary and secondary school. This Aid has resulted in girls' enrolment rates of 93%.
- In Malawi, support was given to the national level Farm Inputs Subsidy Programme, which targets 1.6 million poorer smallholder farmers, many of whom were women.
- Support to the International Labour Organisation's Women's Entrepreneurship, Development programme.
- Gender Equality programmes in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Lao and Cambodia. In Tanzania, for example, 230 women who run enterprises and who were supported through this programme, have accessed international markets. In Tigray, one of the poorest areas in Ethiopia, 600 women received training in business skills and credit.
- In Uganda, Irish Aid funded training in 2010 for 2,500 aspiring female political candidates in the 2011 national and local government elections. Most of the women trained were nominated, and 1,546 were successful in being elected in February 2011

Gender equality has also been integrated into Irish Aid's policy dialogue at the international level through the OECD's Development Assistance Committee network on gender 'Gendernet' and through specific work on gender-based violence. Finally, gender mainstreaming is a tool that can be used to integrate gender equality into all policies and programmes. According to a recent review of Irish Aid's Gender Equality Policy (Irish Aid 2012) gender mainstreaming has helped to strengthen Irish Aid's work on gender equality with its programme countries in areas such as women's and girl's access to education in Zambia and Ethiopia, on mainstreaming gender and HIV/AIDS into land policy in Uganda, on gender-based violence in Mozambique and in the agricultural sector and Malawi. The review did, however, point to the need for more training and awareness of staff working for Irish Aid in gender equality and gender mainstreaming at both operational and strategic levels, and to approach the monitoring of expenditure on gender equality in more systematic ways.



## 4 GENDER EQUALITY, DECENT WORK AND THE MDGs: ACTIONS FOR TRADE UNIONS

Gender equality and decent work are fundamental human rights and are central to social justice. Yet this publication has shown that women in the developing world do not have access to decent work and continue to face persistent inequalities compared with men. Although women's labour market participation has increased in recent years, millions of women experience unemployment, low wages and limited employment protection or security, which has worsened in the global economic crisis. As a result the feminisation of insecure, informal and precarious work needs to be seen as a fundamental issue of fairness and justice. Women have a key role to play as economic agents of change so that they can participate in the transformation of their societies and economies and contribute to poverty alleviation and economic growth (ILO 2009). If women have access to more power and decision-making in their households, in the labour market, in trade unions and in politics they can contribute to economic and social development and poverty alleviation, and ultimately the achievement of the MDGs.

Trade unions have a crucial role to play in building awareness amongst their membership of the need for global solidarity, global justice, decent work and gender equality. In particular, trade unions can help to improve the visibility of the demand for Decent Work for All, so that it is central to development cooperation through donor programmes and in the priorities established by recipient country partners to meet the MDGs.

This can include raising awareness, campaigns and lobbying through global solidarity with the ITUC and the Global Union Federations, and at the national level in the following areas:

- To ensure that gender equality is central to the demand for Decent Work for All so that women have rights to decent work, including employment opportunities, living wages, social protection (including maternity protection, health insurance, pensions etc.) and workplace health and safety standards.
- The mainstreaming of gender equality into labour market policies, collective agreements and trade union policies, which should also include informal and precarious women workers. A key to this is to promote the role of women in decision-making positions in trade unions and for women to have a visible presence in collective bargaining, particularly in the poorest countries.
- Increased funding from governments and the international community to support programmes for women's equal access to decent and equal employment, training, access to credit and microcredit and living minimum wages, particularly in the poorest countries and the most disadvantaged and excluded women and girls.
- Gender-based analyses of macroeconomic policies are needed in areas such as global trade and financial policies to show their impact on women's access to decent work.
- Legal frameworks to promote non-discrimination in access to education, land, credit and other productive resources.

- The collection of sex-disaggregated data on women's work, pay and time use, including women's informal and unpaid work.
- Advocate for better protection of migrant workers, domestic workers and informal workers who are at risk of exploitation either because they are undocumented or because they work in sectors that are poorly regulated.
- Trade unions should urge governments and international organisations to promote socially just and ethical migration.
- Support should be given to trade union campaigns on women's access to decent work, social protection, maternity protection and access to subsidised child care.
- Through global solidarity ensure that there is ratification and implementation of core decent work standards through the relevant ILO conventions.

At the national level it is important that ICTU and its affiliated trade unions engage with the government and Irish Aid in the following areas:

- Engage directly with Irish Aid so that gender equality and decent work are fully mainstreamed into all Irish Aid activities. While progress has been made, this is particularly relevant in ensuring that Decent Work for All is addressed through strategic and programme level activities, in engagement with international organisations, including the ILO, and through country programmes.
- Gender mainstreaming as a tool for gender equality can have a potentially transformative impact on gender relations and should be fully implemented in all Irish Aid programmes.
- Decent work for women was not highlighted as a fundamental issue in the recent review of Irish Aid's Gender Equality Policy. It is all the more urgent that trade unions in Ireland address this issue with Irish Aid in the light of the severe impact of the global economic crisis on women's access to decent work.
- It is important that Irish Aid actively promotes all elements of gender equality and decent work through its programmes and assistance, including engagement and partnership with trade unions and in supporting collective bargaining and the social dialogue through country-level assistance.
- In implementing its goals on women's empowerment it is important that Irish Aid also supports women to take up trade union decision-making positions.
- In this light there is a role for Irish Aid in building trade union capacity and promoting opportunities for trade unions to work in partnership with civil society organisations (CSOs) around poverty alleviation, gender equality and decent work.
- A further area for development is to learn from other countries about Gender Responsive Budgeting so that an assessment is made of overseas aid development budgets and priorities established in the budgets of country programmes. There are a number of lessons from the UK's Department for International Development (DIFD) in the UK (Budlender and Hewitt 2003), and by adopting practical measures such as those introduced under the Austrian Development Cooperation (2009) Making Budgets Gender-Sensitive: A Checklist for Programme-Based Aid.

- Finally, concerted pressure from trade unions needs to be put on the government to ensure that it meets its commitment to spend 0.7% of national income on overseas aid, before 2015.

In Ireland, ICTU and its affiliated trade unions can do much to promote global solidarity around decent work and the MDGs through awareness raising and training of trade union leaders and members. This will be important in creating an active dialogue with the government, international organisations and global union federations in implementing new measures to progress decent work and in monitoring and reporting on progress to achieving Decent Work for All.



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United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): Gender Responsive Planning and Budgeting [http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/povertyreduction/focus\\_areas/focus\\_gender\\_and\\_poverty/gender-responsiveplanningandbudgeting.html](http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourwork/povertyreduction/focus_areas/focus_gender_and_poverty/gender-responsiveplanningandbudgeting.html)

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#### Links to NGOs and other relevant organisations

Self-Help Africa, Women and Development <http://www.selfhelpafrica.org/selfhelp/Main/ISSUES-Women.htm>

ILO Gender: <http://www.ilo.org/gender>

United Nations Women: <http://www.un.org/women>

StreetNet International: <http://www.streetnet.org.za/>

Public Services International: [www.psi-world.org/en/issue/migration](http://www.psi-world.org/en/issue/migration)

International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) <http://www.ituc-csi.org>

Global Union Federations: <http://www.global-unions.org>



# APPENDIX 1

## ILO CONVENTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS THAT PROMOTE DECENT WORK AND GENDER EQUALITY

### Fundamental principles and rights at work

Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951, No. 100, and Recommendation No. 90  
Discrimination (Employment & Occupation) Convention, 1958, No. 111, and Recommendation No. 111  
Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948, No. 87  
Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949, No. 98  
Minimum Age Convention, 1973, No. 138, and Recommendation No. 146  
Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999, No. 182, and Recommendation No. 190  
Forced Labour Convention, 1930, No. 29, and Recommendation No. 35  
Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957, No. 105

### Maternity protection, work and family

Maternity Protection Convention, 2000, No. 183, and Recommendation No. 191  
Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981, No. 156, and Recommendation No. 165

### Employment promotion

Employment Policy Convention, 1964, No. 122, and Recommendation No. 122  
Employment Policy (Supplementary Provision) Recommendation, 1984, No. 169  
Human Resources Development Convention, 1975, No. 142, and revised by Recommendation No. 195, 2004  
Termination of Employment Convention, 1982, No. 158, and Recommendation No. 166  
Job Creation in Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises Recommendation, 1998, No. 189  
Employment Relationship Recommendation, 2006, No. 198

### Specific categories

HIV and AIDS Recommendation, 2010, No. 200  
Domestic Workers Convention, 2011, No. 189, and Recommendation No. 201  
Indigenous and Tribal People's Convention, 1989, No. 169  
Migration for Employment Convention (Revised), 1949, No. 97, and Recommendation No. 86  
Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) Convention, 1975, No. 143, and Recommendation No. 151

### Working conditions

Night Work (Women) Convention (Revised), 1948, No 89,  
Protocol of 1990 to the Night Work (Women) Convention No. 89 Night Work Convention,  
1990, No. 171, and Recommendation No. 78 Home Work Convention, 1996, No. 177 and  
Recommendation No. 184  
Part-time Work Convention, 1994, No. 175, and Recommendation No. 182  
Source: ILO (2012) Gender equality and decent work: selected ILO Conventions and  
Recommendations that promote gender equality as of 2012. Geneva: ILO

