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WHITE PAPER: Women at Work

I started there [in 1994] at \$50,000 and two years later, I left at \$55,000. I was the first development officer hired in that college and I was the only woman in that office except for the secretaries. I was the only professional woman. The men – they were making much, much more, double the salary I was making.

– Development Director, West Coast

(Getting Even: Why Women Don't Get Paid Like Men and What to Do About It, Evelyn Murphy, Touchstone, 2005.)

Overview

Women have always worked inside the home. Over the last century, however, women's participation in the labor force has increased steadily and dramatically. Today, women make up 45% of the world's workforce¹ with more women than ever before participating in labor markets worldwide, either in work or actively looking for a job.² Through their paid work, women around the world continue to make tremendous contributions to the economy in a variety of occupations – as teachers, secretaries, welders, doctors, machine operators and child care workers, among others.

Despite increased labor participation, women still face numerous challenges. Whether in the informal or formal economy, or in developing or developed nations, women do not see improvements in job quality, and their working conditions have not led to true social and economic empowerment, especially in the world's poor regions.³ There continues to be strong evidence of the “continued disadvantage faced by women in both gaining access to employment and in particular access to quality employment.”⁴

¹ AFL-CIO. *Workers' Rights are Women's Rights*.

www.alfcio.org

² International Labour Organization. *Global Employment Trends for Women Brief*, March 2007, p. 1.

www.ilo.org/public/english/region/ampro/cinterfor/temas/gender/news/getw07.pdf

³ Mary Cornish. *Closing the Global Gender Pay Gap: Securing Justice for Women's Work*, April 2007, p. 223, Vol. 27, Issue 2.

www.law.uiuc.edu/publications/cj&pj/archive/vol_28/index.html

⁴ Jill Rubery. United Nations. *Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Employability in EU Countries*, January 2004, p. 3.

www.unece.org

Today, women worldwide on average earn approximately two-thirds of what men earn and make up the majority of the world's part-time workers, between 60 and 90%.⁵ In some parts of the world, women's parity in primary education has not increased, a key to new employment opportunities.⁶ As a result of their lower earning status long term, women in the labor force have been left behind when it comes to retirement and pensions.

Women also still suffer from sexual harassment and domestic violence in the workplace, as well as issues around promotion and breaking through the "glass ceiling." Numerous studies also point to women's reproductive roles as affecting their participation in the labor force, either working part-time or interrupting employment to raise children.

Decent work and wages help lift women and their children out of poverty, which among other adverse consequences has a "marked negative effect on child development."⁷ Low earnings also impact women's quality of life and may be a factor in keeping them in abusive relationships.⁸ Finally, increasing the female labor force in positive ways contributes to the living standards, public finances and economies of countries everywhere. A report by the World Economic Forum states that "the advancement of women is an important economic, business and societal issue with a significant impact on the growth of nations."⁹

More Women at Work in the World

In the last century, the working world has changed dramatically for women. As more women advance their education, they are no longer "limited to jobs as domestic servants, factory girls, sales clerk, secretaries, nurses or teachers."¹⁰ Today, more women are moving into positions of key importance within the family economy, in some cases becoming the sole breadwinner.¹¹

Women's participation in the workforce is often not optional, as they must work to ensure family survival "in the face of declining real wages and the increased monetary cost of subsistence resulting from cutbacks in public services and subsidies."¹² If women are not the sole support of their household, then they are part of a two-income family needed to survive. Today, the single male breadwinner household model is no longer possible for families in many countries.¹³ In the

⁵ International Labour Organization. *Facts on Women at Work*, p. 1.

www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/budapest/download/womenwork.pdf

⁶ UNIFEM. *Progress of the World's Women 2005: Overview Women, Work and Poverty*, p. 10.

www.unifem.org/attachments/products/PoWW2005_eng.pdf

⁷ OECD Observer. *Babies and Bosses*. March 2005, p. 10

www.oecdobserver.org

⁸ Institute for Women's Policy Research. *Still a Man's Labor Market: The Long Term Earnings Gap*, July 2004, p.1.

www.iwpr.org

⁹ World Economic Forum. *Global Gender Gap Report 2007*, Preface, vii.

www.weforum.org/pdf/gendergap/report2007.pdf

¹⁰ Institute for Women's Policy Research. *Still a Man's Labor Market: The Long Term Earnings Gap*, July 2004, p.1.

www.iwpr.org

¹¹ Jill Rubery. United Nations. *Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Employability in EU Countries*, January 2004, p.3.

www.unece.org

¹² UNESCO. *EFA Global Monitoring Report: Historical Lessons. 2003-2004*, p. 5.

www.portal.unesco.org/education/

¹³ Jill Rubery. United Nations. *Gender Mainstreaming and Women's Employability in EU Countries*, January 2004, p.3.

www.unece.org

United States, the Census Bureau released data that in 2009 the number of women who are their families' sole breadwinners had risen from the previous year, at 4% of the labor force, or about 963,000 mothers in total.¹⁴

As a result, the growing proportion of women in the workforce and the narrowing gap between male and female participation rates has been one of the most striking labor trends of recent times.¹⁵ In 2008, 1.2 billion of the 3 billion workers in the world were women.¹⁶ The ongoing global economic crisis, however, has increased the number of unemployed women worldwide by up to 22 million in 2009, "making decent work for women increasingly difficult."¹⁷ The recession is pushing women into jobs that are vulnerable and unstable, adding to the burden that they are "already paid less than men in a shrinking employment market."¹⁸ The gender impact of the economic crisis in terms of unemployment rates is expected to be more detrimental to women than men in most regions of the world, and most clearly in Latin America and the Caribbean.¹⁹

In the U.S., however, the economic recession has had an interesting consequence: women could make up a majority of America's workforce for the first time in history.²⁰ In fact, 82% of job cuts have impacted men, particularly in the manufacturing and construction sectors. Women more heavily populate positions in health care and education, which are less sensitive to economic cycles.²¹

Of the 121 million women age 16 years and over in the U.S., 72 million, or 59.5% were labor force participants – either working or looking for work.²² Women comprised 46.5% of the total U.S. workforce and are projected to account for 47% of the labor force by 2016.²³

While the gender employment gap is closing in some countries, trends vary from region to region. Despite these variations, the difference between male and female economic activity "remains conspicuous throughout the world."²⁴ About 80 women per 100 men are economically active in the developed economies, the European Union, Central and Eastern Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and East Asia. In sub-Saharan Africa, the ratio is 75 women per 100 men;

¹⁴ msnbc.com. *Moms as sole breadwinners reach record high*, Jan. 15, 2010, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34880372/ns/business-careers/>

¹⁵ International Labour Organization. *Global Employment Trends for Women Brief*, March 2009, p. 10. http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_103456.pdf

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ International Labour Organization. *ILO warns economic crisis could generate up to 22 million more unemployed women in 2009, jeopardize equality gains at work and at home*, March 5, 2009. [http://www.ilo.org/global/About the ILO/Media and public information/Press releases/lang--en/WCMS_103447/index.htm](http://www.ilo.org/global/About%20the%20ILO/Media%20and%20public%20information/Press%20releases/lang-en/WCMS_103447/index.htm)

¹⁸ In These Times. *Global Recession Hitting Women Harder than Men*, July 22, 2009, http://www.inthesetimes.com/working/entry/4642/global_recession_hitting_women_harder_than_men/

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Cornell University. *Workplace Issues Today: Women may make up majority of workforce as layoffs disproportionately affect men*, (2010). <http://blogs.cornell.edu/catherwood/2009/02/11/workplace-issues-today-woman-may-make-up-majority-of-workforce-as-layoffs-disproportionately-affect-men/>

²¹ Ibid.

²² United States Department of Labor. *Quick Stats on Women Workers 2008*, www.dol.gov/wb/stats/main.htm

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ International Labour Organization. *Global Employment Trends for Women Brief*, March 2007, p. 1. www.ilo.org/public/english/region/ampro/cinterfor/temas/gender/news/getw07.pdf

in South East Asia and the Pacific it is 73 to 100; and in Latin America and the Caribbean, 69 to 100.²⁵ In 10 years, 80 % of all women in industrialized countries and 70 % of all women globally will work outside the home.²⁶

How Work is Valued

Work is usually valued and measured by the money paid for it. Women, however, often receive no pay for a large portion of the work they perform, which often includes household labor, child care, elder care and family subsistence farming.²⁷ As a result, “unpaid labor contributes to the low economic status of women worldwide.”²⁸

This distinction between “unpaid work” and “paying work” has led to the frequently cited slogan, “Women do two-thirds of the world’s work, receive 10 % of the world’s income, and own 1 % of the means of production.” The lack of recognition of the critical role of unpaid work points to the imbalance between work and remuneration faced by women and “continues to obstruct equitable economic development.”²⁹ Women spend 50 to 70 % of the time men spend on paid work, but about twice as much or more time as men on unpaid work.³⁰

Many women who do work outside the home are disproportionately affected by working poverty and do not earn enough to lift themselves and their families above the US \$1 a day threshold. Today, women comprise at least 70 % of the world’s working poor.³¹

Although myriad factors contribute to this poverty, many women especially in developing regions work in the informal sector of the economy, such as agricultural production, garment sewing, factory work and domestic service. They often deal with difficult working conditions, including “long working hours, job insecurity and lack of benefits.”³² As a result of the constraints within the household, and outside the household in low-wage jobs, women have a greater vulnerability in the world of work.³³

Gender Wage Gap

While women are entering the paid labor force in greater numbers, the gender pay gap exists universally. The size of the gap, however, varies from country to country.³⁴ Some pay equity progress has been made primarily in developed countries in Europe, but for the most part,

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). *Women and Men in OECD Countries: Labor Market 2006*.

www.oecd.org/dataoecd/19/14/38172488.pdf

²⁷ Work of Women. *Women’s Work: An overview*.

www.workofwomen.org

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ International Labour Organization. *Facts on Women at Work*.

www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/budapest/download/womenwork.pdf

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Work of Women. *Women’s Work: An Overview*

www.workofwomen.org

³³ International Labour Organization. *Facts on Women at Work*.

www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/budapest/download/womenwork.pdf

³⁴ United Nations Development Center. *International Poverty Center. The Gender Pay Gap Over Women’s Working Lifetime, One Pager*, June 2006.

www.undp-povertycentre.org

“existing labor market mechanisms have not made significant progress in remedying this global gender pay gap.”³⁵

In both industrialized and developing nations, women working outside the home earn much less pay than men do. In Middle Eastern and North African countries, women’s wages are around 30 % of men’s; 40 % in Latin America and South Asia; 50 % in sub-Saharan Africa; and around 60 to 70 % in East Asia and industrialized countries.³⁶

The overall pay gap between men and women worldwide, however, may be much higher than originally estimated by official government figures. Based on a survey by the International Trade Union Confederation of 300,000 women and men in 20 countries, the 2009 global pay gap is at 22% rather than the 16.5 % figure taken in 2008.³⁷

The gender wage gap still plagues the American workforce. Out of 19 countries with membership in the OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development), the U.S. has the largest gender earnings gap, save for Austria and Switzerland. In the U.S., women with full-time jobs earned salaries equal to 77.9 % of what men earned, up from 77.5 % in 2007 and about 64 % in 2000. For most U.S. women of color and older women, the earnings gap was even greater.³⁸

Many social and cultural factors may explain the persistent gender pay gap. For one, women choose to interrupt their careers, working part-time or temporarily dropping out, to raise children. Such decisions can permanently disrupt earning power.³⁹ However, some research questions whether the patterns of working mothers reflect choice or constraint. For example, long working hours have a “disproportionate impact on women, as they are still the main care providers, thus reducing their options as to whether to work, where and in what types of jobs.”⁴⁰

Another reason for the gender pay gap is that boys make different educational choices than girls which lead to better paying careers. These choices are not just a matter of preference but are influenced by society, culture, teachers, teaching materials and family-influence. While women in many parts of the world, especially developed countries, have made remarkable gains in education, these “achievements have resulted in only modest improvements in pay equity.”⁴¹ In developing countries, many girls have no choices as to education due to poverty, cultural norms and gender. “Gender discrimination and the subordinate role of women in societies across the

³⁵ Cornish, Mary. *Closing the Global Gender Pay Gap: Securing Justice for Women’s Work*, April 2007, p. 219, Vol. 27, Issue 2.

www.law.uiuc.edu/publications/cj&pj/archive/vol_28/index.html

³⁶ Work of Women. Women’s Work: An Overview

www.workofwomen.org

³⁷ International Trade Union Confederation. *New Report Shows Global Gender Pay Gap Bigger Than Previously Thought*, 2009. <http://www.ituc-csi.org/new-report-shows-global-gender-pay.html>

³⁸ msnbc.com. *Moms as sole breadwinners reach record high*, Jan. 15, 2010.

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34880372/ns/business-careers/>

³⁹ United Nations Development Center. *International Poverty Center. The Gender Pay Gap Over Women’s Working Lifetime, One Pager*, June 2006.

www.undp-povertycentre.org

⁴⁰ International Labor Conference: 96th Session 2007. *Equality at work: Tackling the challenges*. p. 77.

www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---webdev/documents/publication/wcms_082607.pdf

⁴¹ Judy Goldberg Dey and Catherine Hill. American Association of University Women Educational Foundation. *Behind the Pay Gap*, April 2007, p. 2.

www.aauw.org/research/behindpaygap.cfm

world have diminished girls' prospects for education."⁴² As a result, their opportunities for future employment are severely limited.

Another major reason for the gender gap in earnings is that "women work in 'women's jobs'—jobs that are predominantly done by women, while men work in 'men's jobs'—those predominantly done by men. This phenomenon is known as the gender segregation of the labor market."⁴³ Even in traditionally "female occupations" such as nursing and teaching, wage equality is lacking.⁴⁴ In addition, women often face barriers in promotion or career development, which excludes or segregates them into certain jobs. It is, however, unclear what comes first—the low wages or the concentration of women in those positions.

Furthermore, some research points to women not asking for equitable pay. As a whole, women are trained not to ask for raises or more money and often are penalized by employers when they do. "Rigid gender-based stereotypes and behavioral norms urge women to behave modestly and wait to be given what they deserve rather than negotiate for it."⁴⁵ Female job candidates who ask for higher salaries before receiving a formal job offer are often not hired at all. Males who negotiate do not face similar negative consequences.⁴⁶

Overall, the employment and wage status of men and that of women display decidedly different features. "Men are more likely to be in core or regular and better remunerated positions, whereas women are often in peripheral, insecure, less-valued positions."⁴⁷

Pensions and Retirement

When women enter their old age and retirement, they suffer more financially. Low wages, career breaks and the skewed division of unpaid work mean that older women are not always entitled to a pension. If they do receive one, it is generally lower than that of men's because throughout their lifetime women earn less than men. Thus, gender, aging and poverty are interrelated.⁴⁸

In developing countries, many women work in informal economies, e.g., agriculture and trading. They continue to work until very old age in precarious jobs with no social security or health care benefits.⁴⁹ In addition, women generally outlive men, and so, if they have been dependent on the male's income, they often are more likely to be poor.⁵⁰

⁴² Oxfam GB. Education: The Global Gender Gap. Parliamentary Briefing, Number 9, March 6, 2000.

www.oxfam.org

⁴³ Institute for Women's Policy Research. *Still a Man's Labor Market: The Long Term Earnings Gap*, Executive Summary, July 2004.

www.iwpr.org/pdf/C355.pdf

⁴⁴ International Labour Organization. *Global Employment Trends for Women Brief*, March 2007. p. 1.

www.ilo.org/public/english/region/ampro/cinterfor/temas/gender/news/getw07.pdf

⁴⁵ Debra Katz and Justine Andronici. *The Wage Gap for Women*, posted November 2006.

www.alternet.org/story/44769/?page=entire

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ International Labor Conference. 91st Session 2003. *Time for Equality at Work*, p. 42.

www.oit.org/declarations

⁴⁸ United Nations Economic and Social Council. *Gender and Aging: Problems, Perceptions and Policies*, January 1999.

www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/csw/aging.htm

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

While there is good news that women employed in formal markets in developed nations are participating in pension and retirement plans in greater numbers than ever before, there is still bad news. Older women still “enter retirement with fewer economic resources than men.”⁵¹ Part-time workers, who are disproportionately women, remain much less likely to participate in an employer-sponsored pension and retirement plan. The most common reasons cited are that an employer did not offer a pension plan, and that by virtue of working part-time, women did not work enough hours to be included in that plan.⁵²

The pay gap also greatly influences retirement. Less money earned during a woman’s working years equals less money for retirement. In addition, women on the threshold of retirement have been most affected by the ailing economy. In the U.S., fully 72 % fear they will have to postpone retirement plans, compared with 54 % of men. Many women have stated they will have to delay their retirement “because of current economic conditions.”⁵³ A global survey of 15,000 people in 15 countries revealed that only 11 % of women felt prepared for retirement, compared to 15 % of men.⁵⁴ Furthermore, if women’s earning power is interrupted by pregnancy, childrearing and care-giving responsibilities, even the small proportion of older women who are eligible for pensions because they were employed in the formal sector, receive lower benefits than men.⁵⁵

Breaking the Glass Ceiling

Despite some gains in the workplace and achieving higher levels of education than ever before, women still struggle to break through the “glass ceiling.” Their share of management positions remains unacceptably low. Even in female-dominated sectors where there are more women managers, a disproportionate number of men rise to senior positions. The rule of thumb still is: “the higher up an organization’s hierarchy, the fewer the women.”⁵⁶

The %age of women company directors, for example, is low in many countries—with Norway leading the way at 21 % and the U.S. at 12.5 %.⁵⁷ In Japan, however, the figure is staggeringly low. Women make up only 10.1 % of managers, a significantly lower rate compared to that of Western countries, even falling far behind Asian countries such as the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore.⁵⁸

The “concrete ceiling” as it is called in Japan, continues to be a major stumbling block for many women in that predominantly patriarchal society. In addition, many women drop out of the

⁵¹ Institute for Women’s Policy Research. *The Gender Gap in Pension Coverage: Women Working Full-Time are Catching Up, but Part-Time Workers Have Been Left Behind*, February 2008.

www.iwpr.org/pdf/ribgender-gape506.pdf

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Pew Research Center. *America’s Changing Workforce: Recession Turns a Graying Office Grayer*, September 3, 2009,

<http://pewsocialtrends.org/assets/pdf/americas-changing-workforce.pdf>

⁵⁴ HSBC Insurance. *Women’s retirement fears exposed in economic downturn*, June 10, 2009.

www.hsbc.com/retirement/future-of-retirement

⁵⁵ World Health Organization. *Women, Ageing and Health: A Framework for Action*, 2007, p. 5.

www.unfpa.org/upload/lib_pub_file/684_filename_ageing.pdf

⁵⁶ International Labour Organization. *Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling: Women in Management, Women in Managerial Jobs*, 2004, p. 13.

www.ilo.org/dyn/gender/docs/RES/292/F267981337/Breaking%20Glass%20PDF%20English.pdf

⁵⁷ Japan Today. *Japanese women demand equality in the workplace*, December 21, 2007.

www.archive.japantoday.com/news/jp/e/tools/print.asp?content=feature&id=1113

⁵⁸ Gender Equality Bureau, Cabinet Office Japan. *White Paper on Gender Equality 2007*, p. 8.

www.gender.go.jp

workplace to have children and are unable to advance their careers. According to one report, following the birth of a first child a high %age of Japanese women stated, “I will stop working.”⁵⁹

In the United States, women represent only 5.3 % of positions of authority at Fortune 500 companies, evidence that they still struggle under the “glass ceiling.”⁶⁰ Overall, women are still concentrated in the most precarious forms of work worldwide and breaking through the glass ceiling appears elusive but for a select few.⁶¹

Sexual Harassment and Violence in the Workplace

I am a 21-year-old Asian woman working in an office as a secretary. Recently a man in the office asked me if I was wearing stockings or pantyhose. I told him to go away or I would report him to personnel. He went away, but later in the day I caught him at the bottom of the stairs trying to look up my skirt. I was totally disgusted and reported him. He was given a written warning. But now he looks at me like I have betrayed him or something. I am very intimidated by this man but also do not want to lose my job ... I think it is quite common in offices for perverted men to harass women in this way. This makes me very angry.

--Posted on <http://sexualharassmentsupport.org/>

Sexual harassment was not given a name until the 1970s when women in the United States demanded it be recognized under federal anti-discrimination legislation. Women in many other countries have since adopted the term, using it to “characterize their experiences, ensure recognition of these forms of conduct and seek to have them prevented.”⁶²

Sexual harassment consists of unwanted behavior of a sexual nature and may “involve physical contact, expression of sexual innuendoes, sexually colored comments and jokes, the exhibition of pornography, or unnecessary and unwanted comments on a person’s appearance.”⁶³ It is a

⁵⁹ Japanese Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare. *White Paper on the Labour Economy*, 2005, p. 35. www.mhlw.go.jp/english/

⁶⁰ California National Organization for Women. *Women in the Workplace: Striving for Work/Life Balance*, 2006, p. 6.

<http://website.canow.org/documents/she/workplacereport2006.pdf>

⁶¹ International Labour Organization. World of Work Magazine of the ILO. *Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling: Women in Management*, June 2001.

www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/magazine/39/news.htm

⁶² International Labour Organization. *Sexual harassment at work: National and international responses*, Conditions of Work and Employment Series, September 2007, No. 2, p. 1.

www.stopvaw.org/International_Labour_Organization2.html

⁶³ The Magazine of the ILO. World of Work, March 1997. *Unwelcome, unwanted and increasingly illegal: Sexual harassment in the workplace*.

www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/magazine/19/sexhar.htm

violation of women's human rights and causes incalculable economic, psychological and physical harm to its victims and serves to reinforce the subordination of women to men in the workplace.⁶⁴

Many women worldwide encounter sexual harassment in the workplace, reducing the quality of working life, jeopardizing their well-being, undermining gender equality and imposing costs on firms and organizations.⁶⁵ In South Korea, for example, the Seoul High Court recently ruled that "forcing a subordinate to drink alcohol was illegal," a practice in some corporate cultures where more women are working today. Companies in that country have become aware of the potential danger of such binge drinking, which leads to risks of sexual harassment, among other gender inequities.⁶⁶

Sexual harassment statistics are hard to come by. In European countries, sexual harassment against women is commonplace, but often goes unreported due to fear of job loss, being considered the guilty party or being ostracized among work colleagues.⁶⁷ Studies in Switzerland show that even on a confidential basis, few women make official complaints.⁶⁸

In the United States, one recent development has been the report of an "alarmingly high" number of high school students reporting sexual advances from their adult bosses and other supervisors at fast food operations. The issue is being raised in a number of lawsuits, including cases now pending in California against Starbucks and a McDonald's franchise owner.⁶⁹

In addition to sexual harassment, many women also experience domestic violence as a work-related issue. According to a Family Violence Prevention Fund study, in the United States approximately 74 % of women who experience abuse at home also experience abuse at the workplace. Abusers harass victims at work via telephone or e-mail, or they come into the workplace to harass or threaten their victims and co-workers.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) approaches violence against women in the world of work as a human rights issue, a labor issue and a health and safety issue with several ILO Conventions and Recommendations addressing this subject.⁷⁰ Much like cases of sexual harassment, many forms of workplace violence do not currently find their way into official police or employer' records in most countries.⁷¹ Again, women may feel constrained to remain silent, fearing reprisals, including the possibility of losing their jobs. An ILO study also found that

⁶⁴ Adapted from the United Nations Report of the Special Rapporteur. *Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective: Violence Against Women*. 2004.

[www.unhcr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/3cb562e561714a66c1256e66003d213c/\\$FILE/G0410202.pdf](http://www.unhcr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/3cb562e561714a66c1256e66003d213c/$FILE/G0410202.pdf)

⁶⁵ International Labour Organization. *Sexual harassment at work: National and international responses*. Conditions of Work and Employment Series, September 2007, No. 2, Preface, vii.

www.stopvaw.org/International_Labour_Organization2.html

⁶⁶ International Herald Tribune. *Corporate Korea corks the bottle as women rise*. June 9, 2007.

www.iht.com/articles/2007/06/10/asia/10korea-web.php

⁶⁷ European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. *Preventing violence and harassment in the workplace*. 2003, p. 2.

www.eurofound.europa.eu/pubdocs/2002/112/en/1/ef02112en.pdf

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ ABC News. *16-year-old Starbucks barista sues over 'sex demands' at work*. January 22, 2010.

<http://abcnews.go.com/Blotter/teenage-starbucks-barista-sues-sex-demands-work/story?id=9631145>

⁷⁰ International Labour Organization. *Violence at Work: A Costly Burden*, 2002.

www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/papers/education/wp208.pdf

⁷¹ Ibid.

women are generally at higher risk of violent incidents at work with 10 % of all violence incidents against women taking place in the workplace.⁷²

The economic recession is also increasing incidents of domestic violence against women. When husbands and fathers are unemployed, they often take out their frustration at home. Various reports also show that in the U.S., hotline calls, shelter visits and domestic violence-related crimes are all on the rise during the financial downturn.⁷³ In addition, women in developing countries who lose paid employment may be forced into the “shadow” economy of prostitution to support themselves and their families, or be prey for international traffickers.⁷⁴

Family Life/Work Balance Issues

One Virginia employer fired a woman after she gave birth, reasoning that “she was no longer dependable since she had delivered a child; that [her] place was at home with her child; that babies get sick sometimes and [she] would have to miss work to care for her child; and that [the employer] needed someone more dependable.”

-- *Bailey v. Scott-Gallagher, Inc.*, 253 Va. 121 (Sup. Ct. 1997)
(Quoted in *Getting Even: Why Women Don't Get Paid Like Men and What to Do About It*, Evelyn Murphy, Touchstone, 2005.)

As more mothers have entered the workforce in increasing numbers, their responsibilities for family care, traditionally assigned to women, have not declined in proportion. As a result of their caregiving duties, women in many countries are attracted to part-time employment, despite the comparatively low-levels of earnings these jobs bring.

In the European Union, about half of mothers with a child under 6 years of age are employed part-time⁷⁵ And in Canada and many other countries, women with family responsibilities are more likely than men to take on regular weekend, part-time jobs trying to accommodate the work schedules of their spouses, who work Monday through Friday.⁷⁶ Meanwhile, women in developing and transition economies are choosing self-employment in the informal economy as a way of reconciling work and family responsibilities.⁷⁷

⁷² International Labour Organization. *The Cost of Violence/Stress at Work and the Benefits of a Violence/Stress-Free Working Environment*. 1998. p.18

www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/whpwb/econo/costs.pdf

⁷³ Manasi Sharma, Global Envision. *Recession-related domestic violence on the rise*, April 10, 2009, p. 1. <http://www.globalenvision.org/2009/03/26/recession-related-violence-rise>

⁷⁴ Olivia Ward, thestar.com. *Recession hits women in developing countries*, March 8, 2009. www.thestar.com/News/World/article/598496

⁷⁵ OECD Employment Outlook. *Balancing Work and Family Life: Helping Parents into Paid Employment*, 2001, Chapter 4.

www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/12/2079435.pdf

⁷⁶ International Labor Conference: 96th Session 2007. *Equality at work: Tackling the challenges*, p. 77.

www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---webdev/documents/publication/wcms_082607.pdf

⁷⁷ International Labour Organization. *Working Time Around the World*. Adapted from press release, June 7, 2007.

www.ilo.org/global/About_the_ILO/Media_and_public_information/Press_releases/lang--en/index.htm?nextRow=41

One of the most striking changes in Europe, Canada and the United States in the last 50 years has been the increase of working mothers with very young children.⁷⁸ Today, approximately 60 % of children under age 6 have mothers who work outside the home, compared to 18 % in 1960.⁷⁹ Figures for other countries vary, with about one-third of Japanese and three-quarters of Swedish mothers working.⁸⁰

Even as mothers enter the workplace, however, many are confronted with company or government policies that are not family-friendly. These include lack of: paid maternity leave; leave for illness and family care; support for breastfeeding; flexible work arrangements; and available, subsidized child care. Evidence on the prevalence of “work-life or family-friendly policies in the industrialized countries is uneven and often unrealizable.”⁸¹ Some countries, however, are doing better than others.

In Japan, all employees are “granted flexible schedules, shorter hours, flextime or overtime exemption, for the first two years of parenthood. Large firms in Japan, those with more than 300 employees, must provide child-care options, such as on-site centers or temporary leaves.”⁸² These parent-friendly policies are the result of concern about a shrinking workforce in Japan. Because of “low birth rates, private industry and governmental policies ‘protect motherhood’ by providing and encouraging child care leaves for working women.”⁸³

The United States has far fewer family-friendly policies and public supports than most other countries with advanced economies.⁸⁴ Federal law does not require paid maternity leave for women in the U.S., although the federal Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 protects workers’ job security during leave taken for the employee’s own disability, illness, or pregnancy and childbirth.⁸⁵ Maternity and child-care leave exists in almost all countries, with the maximum leave now available exceeding one year in at least 18 countries. Duration of benefits and degree of remuneration of maternity leave, however, vary from country to country.⁸⁶

⁷⁸ Janet C. Gornick and Marcia K. Meyers. New America Foundation. Work & Family Program. *Helping Parents into Paid Employment*, 2001, Chapter 4.

www.newamerica.net/publications/policy/helping_americas_working_parents

⁷⁹ Melinda Beck. The Wall Street Journal. *The next big population bulge: Generation Y shows its might*. February 3, 1997.

www.wsj.com

⁸⁰ Eileen Applebaum; Thomas Bailey; Peter Berg; and Arne Kalleberg. *Organizations and the Intersection of Work and Family: New Pressures on Families and Organizations*. The Oxford Handbook of Work and Organizations. Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 53.

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Nicole Price Fasig. Working Mother Magazine online edition. *Focus on the 100 Best – Global Snapshot*. www.workingmother.com

⁸³ Yale University Women Faculty Forum. *Women’s Working Lives: Comparable Challenges in Japan and the United States*. Spring 2007

www.yale.edu/wff/documents/April4panel_000.doc

⁸⁴ Heidi Harmann; Ariane Hegewisch,; and Vicky Lovell. Economic Policy Institute. *Briefing Paper: An Economy That Puts Families First*, May 2007, p. 2.

<www.sharedprosperity.org/bp190.html>

⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 6

⁸⁶ Janet Gornick, and Marcia K. Meyers. New America Foundation. Work & Family Program. *Helping America’s Working Parents: What Can We Learn from Europe and Canada?* November 2004, p. 4.

www.newamerica.net/publications/policy/helping_americas_working_parents

Due to the poor economy and dearth of jobs, working families are now compelled to go to work, even if a family member is sick or a new child is born and needs their care.⁸⁷ In a recent survey of U.S. workers, 50% of working caregivers said they were less comfortable taking time from work to provide care due to the economic downturn.⁸⁸ In addition, the economic crisis is heavily affecting families, with latest data showing that gender roles are flexible and going in the direction of egalitarian roles.⁸⁹

Overall, balancing work and family life is a complex issue for women, but is critical on many levels, because it helps to reduce poverty and enhances equity between men and women.

Conclusions

Many people assume that after decades of progress, most women are earning good salaries in professional jobs. The truth is, a majority of women still work in jobs with low pay, unpredictable work schedules, meager benefits and little opportunity for advancement. Countless other women work in the informal economy, (which includes agriculture), and are likely to live in poverty.⁹⁰

Adding to the challenges that women already face in the workforce, the global financial crisis is especially impacting them. The differential impact varies across countries, but both developed and developing countries are feeling the brunt, especially households headed by single women.⁹¹

Whether women are working in industrialized nations or developing countries, in rural or urban settings, most women still carry the triple burden of raising children, performing household chores and earning an income for their family. Even with this reality, a large portion of women's work remains undervalued and unrecognized.⁹²

In recognition of the vital role that working women play in family welfare and survival, many governments are taking measures to overcome "traditional, cultural and other forms of discrimination that bar women from access to equal opportunities at work."⁹³ Yet progress on three key areas for gender equality is slow and still lacking: the glass ceiling, the gender pay gap, and the "sticky floor" (women in the lowest paid jobs and living in poverty).⁹⁴

Policy-makers and employers not only need to place women's employment at the center of social and economic policies, they also need to recognize that the challenges faced by women in the world of work require intervention tailored to specific needs.⁹⁵ Making these critical changes for

⁸⁷ Sloan Work and Family Research Network. *The Impact of the Recession on Work and Family*, 2009. Issue 19, p. 3

http://wfnetwork.bc.edu/pdfs/policy_makers19.pdf

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ msnbc.com, *Moms as sole breadwinners reach record high*, Jan. 15, 2010,

<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/34880372/ns/business-careers/>

⁹⁰ International Labour Organization. *Facts on Women at Work*, p. 1.

www.ilo.org/public/english/region/eurpro/budapest/download/womenwork.pdf

⁹¹ UNFPA. *Fact Sheet: Economic Meltdown and Women*, August 2009.

www.unfpa.org/public/site/global/lang/en/economic_meltdown

⁹² Work of Women. *Women's Work: An Overview*.

www.workofwomen.org

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ International Labour Organization. *Women's Employment: Global Trends and ILO Responses*, 2005, p. 17.

www.ilo.ru/gender/files/WomenEmploymentsEng.pdf

⁹⁵ International Labour Organization. *Global Employment Trends for Women Brief*, March 2007, p.13.

working women will require action by individuals, employers and governments worldwide and the political will of all parties involved. Until then, women will remain second-class citizens in the world of work, and the feminization of poverty will continue into future generations.

Soroptimist Programs

[Soroptimist](#) is an international volunteer organization for business and professional women who work to improve the lives of women and girls, in local communities and throughout the world. Clubs undertake a number of different projects to confront realities facing women, both locally and throughout the world. Projects help women on a variety of fronts that impact their working lives, including: providing education and job-skills training, which leads to better employment opportunities; confronting domestic violence in the workplace; and helping women in the wake of natural and man-made disasters. As an organization, Soroptimist supports the following programs:

Soroptimist Women’s Opportunity Awards – The [Women’s Opportunity Awards](#) program is Soroptimist’s major project. The awards improve the lives of women by giving them the resources they need to upgrade their education, skills and employment prospects. Each year, Soroptimist clubs in 19 countries and territories assist women in overcoming personal difficulties and improving their lives through education and skills training. The women, who provide the primary source of financial support for their families, may use the cash award to offset any costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education, including, books, childcare and transportation. Club recipients become eligible for additional cash awards at other levels of the organization, including three \$10,000 finalist awards.

Many Women’s Opportunity Award recipients have overcome enormous obstacles in their quest for a better life, including poverty, domestic violence and substance abuse. Each year, more than \$1 million is disbursed through awards at various levels of the organization to help women achieve their dreams of a better life for themselves and their families. Since the Women’s Opportunity Awards program began in 1972, it is estimated that \$20 million has been disbursed and more than 22,500 women have been assisted.

Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls – Often the abilities and ambitions of individual Soroptimist clubs exceed their financial resources. The organization introduced the Soroptimist Club Grants for Women and Girls in 1997 to assist with community projects that improve the lives of women and girls. Each year, grants are given to clubs working on projects that help foster economic independence. For the 2009-2010 club year, Soroptimist funded \$175,000 in club grants to 31 Soroptimist clubs for new or ongoing projects. Projects have included funding a micro-enterprise artisan project for low-income women, teaching marketable job skills to women with disabilities, and providing services to women who are domestic abuse survivors.

Soroptimist Workplace Campaign to End Domestic Violence – This ongoing effort raises awareness about domestic violence as a workplace concern. Local Soroptimist club members distribute hotline cards containing local contact information for domestic violence shelters and other services. Each year, tens of thousands of domestic violence hotline cards are distributed in workplaces throughout the world.

In addition, clubs also hold lectures in their workplaces to draw attention to the issue of domestic violence as a workplace concern; lobby their employers to institute policies and include domestic

www.ilo.org/public/english/region/ampro/cinterfor/temas/gender/news/getw07.pdf

violence information in their personnel handbooks; and hold seminars for local businesses about the costs associated with domestic violence in the workplace. For more information, please read the white paper: [Domestic Violence as a Workplace Concern](#).