

but there are ongoing concerns about their low wages, vulnerable employment, underlining limited job stability and lack of social protection. Gender wage gaps and occupational segregation persist, and women are overrepresented in part-time work. The application of the principle of equal pay for work of equal value is critical for the promotion of decent work for women. A range of measures have enhanced women's access to and participation in the labour market, including employment acts that promote equal opportunities for women, strengthened labour standards, guaranteed social security, tax credits to encourage women's employment, allowances for child care, work programmes and increased resources for job training.

4. In many countries, women's increased participation in the labour market has not been accompanied by an increase in men's participation in unpaid work. Women, in particular in developing countries, have to spend too many hours on domestic work, preventing them from participating in societal or development actng icdo4.68 dpms6()T0.0166 Tc38 Tw 10.3273

enhancing women's knowledge of their rights and the enforcement of legislation and policies to ensure women's equal access to and control over economic resources.

8. The current global financial and economic crisis poses a challenge to progress made in gender equality in many areas. Evidence from some countries suggests that while more men may become unemployed as a result of economic crisis, unemployment among women is more persistent than among men. Certain groups of women, such as migrant women and domestic workers, are especially vulnerable during times of economic downturn. The diminished flow of remittances negatively impacts households in countries of origin. Economic hardship and lack of jobs can also mean that women are more vulnerable to trafficking.

9. The financial crisis is a product of the deregulated financial sector that focused on profit maximization at the expense of people. The emphasis on low inflation and fiscal balance has not delivered strong and sustained economic growth. Neglect of domestic demand and dependence on exports has made developing countries vulnerable to market fluctuations and created an environment that has not been conducive to women's economic empowerment. The financial and economic crisis

generation in infrastructure. Investment in the social sector not only promotes women's empowerment, but also makes economic sense. Evidence suggests that projects that focus on early-childhood development and home-based care have a stronger positive impact on employment, income and pro-poor growth than infrastructure projects.

13. As the crisis is expected to result in an increase in poverty, in particular for women, actions are necessary and should target poor households, particularly in rural areas. These can include access to affordable housing, free health services and vocational training and government-backed loans with low interest rates. Measures such as cash transfers, the provision of cheap fertilizers, microcredit schemes, establishment of women's cooperatives and promotion of women's entrepreneurial activities, also aim to tackle women's poverty. Microcredit schemes with no collateral and low interest have been successful in increasing women's access to credit. Poverty alleviation policies cannot achieve their goals, however, if they do not focus on rights, capacity-building and empowerment of women. Cash transfer programmes, for example, should also provide training opportunities and temporary employment for women. Particular attention should be paid to alleviating the burden of unpaid work of female-headed households to increase their opportunities for participation in the labour market.

14. Women continue to be largely absent from decision-making positions, in particular in the economic and financial sectors, with implications on the allocation of resources. Yet women in leadership positions can serve as role models to empower young women to seek opportunities in all sectors and levels of the labour market. Quotas have been effective in both the public and the private sector to address the underrepresentation of women in political and economic decision-making roles, for example as members of boards of directors of trading companies. Further measures are needed to ensure effective implementation of quotas and other temporary special measures to increase women's participation in decision-making.

15. Strong measures are needed to eliminate stereotypical attitudes regarding the role of women and men in society, which limit women's participation in the labour market. The role of families in early gender socialization remains critical in the elimination of gender stereotypes. In addition, opportunities should be sought to enhance the role of the media in providing a more balanced and realistic portrayal of women, including in leadership positions.

16. Labour market studies and expert meetings can serve to better understand the impact of the crisis on women and develop gender-sensitive responses. The availability of good and reliable data disaggregated by sex and age supports the formulation of gender-sensitive policy responses to the crisis.

17. Partnerships among different stakeholders have been instrumental in the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment. Coordination and collaboration between economic and social policymakers has contributed to the incorporation of social priorities in the design of economic policies. Partnerships with civil society, including women's organizations, in advocating for women's economic empowerment and raising awareness among women of their rights are needed and should be enhanced. Collaboration between the private and the public sector in job creation for women should be expanded and strengthened to promote women's economic empowerment. Trade unions should play an active role in improving the working conditions of women in the labour market.