

TRANSFORMING ECONOMIES, REALIZING RIGHTS

Progress of the World's Women: Transforming economies, realizing rights documents the ways in which current economic and social policies are failing women in rich and poor countries alike, and asks, what would the economy look like if it truly worked for women?

The report brings together human rights and economic policymaking, and provides the key elements for a far reaching new policy agenda that can transform economies and make women's rights a reality.

FACT SHEET – CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA

1 / TRANSFORMING WORK FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS

With the right mix of economic and social policies, governments can generate decent jobs for women and ensure that the unpaid care work that goes into sustaining all economies is recognized and supported.

PERSISTENT GENDER GAPS IN LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND PAY

Between 1990 and 2013, women's LFPR decreased, from 54 per cent to 50 per cent. In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, the drop in economic output following the dismantling of state socialism and the transition to a market economy have had a negative impact on employment, despite some recovery since 2000. Since the transition, these countries have also placed less emphasis on policies that enable women to combine work and family responsibilities. The result of these factors combined is that women's LFPR has not recovered to pre-transition levels.

In 2013, women's LFPR was the highest in Kazakhstan with 67.7 per cent, and Turkey had the lowest with 29.4 per cent. Between 1990 and 2013, the Republic of Moldova saw the largest decrease in women's LFPR from 61.1 to 37.6 per cent.

The gender pay gap is 21.8 per cent in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (compared to 24 per cent, globally).

Lower rates of labour force participation, gender pay gaps and less access to pensions and other social protection contribute to large lifetime income gaps. In Turkey, women can expect to earn just 25 per cent of men's incomes over their lifetime.

TOO OFTEN WOMEN ARE TRAPPED IN LOW PAID, POOR QUALITY WORK

In Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, 21 per cent of women's employment (and 29 per cent of men's) is informal.

While this is much lower than for some developing regions, where 75 per cent or more of women's employment is informal, it nevertheless constitutes a large number of workers who are in unprotected jobs.

Agricultural informal self-employment is 15 per cent for women and 18 per cent for men in the region.

WOMEN'S DISPROPORTIONATE SHARE OF UNPAID CARE WORK LIMITS THEIR OPPORTUNITIES

Across the region, women report doing a larger share of unpaid care and domestic work: 8 times as much in Albania, almost 6 times as much in Armenia, and over 3 times as much in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

POLICIES TO TRANSFORM LABOUR MARKETS

Laws are an important basis for women's right to and at work. By 2014, countries such as Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, and the Republic of Moldova, had laws in place for equal remuneration for work of equal value; non-discrimination based on gender in hiring and banning sexual harassment in employment.

Recognizing, reducing and redistributing women's unpaid care and domestic work

Governments in low-income countries can take a range of measures, including investments in basic social services and infrastructure (see below); as well as family-friendly policies, such as the provision of childcare services and paid leave for women and men.

The ILO recommends that Governments should provide a minimum of 14 weeks paid maternity leave, paid for collectively (i.e. not just by employers). All countries with data in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia meet or exceed this minimum. In 2013, the highest minimum length of paid maternity leave was in Croatia, with 58 weeks.

In 2013, 13 countries offered paternity leave, but often just a few days, and often unpaid. Slovenia offers the most days for paternity leave, with a minimum length of 90 days.

Narrowing gender pay gaps and addressing occupational segregation

Minimum wages have played an essential part in addressing low pay, reducing inequality and narrowing gender pay gaps.

Targets and quotas, including for corporate boards and senior positions in the public sector have also been used to combat stereotypes and address occupational segregation.

Guaranteeing domestic worker's rights

The ILO Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189) was adopted in 2011. The convention requires States to extend basic labour rights to domestic workers, such as overtime pay, annual paid leave, minimum wages and safe working conditions. To date, no country in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia has ratified the convention.

2/ MAKING SOCIAL POLICY WORK FOR WOMEN

Well-designed social policies can enhance women's income security, and their ability to realize their potential and expand their life options. Social protection policies—including family and child allowances and old-age pensions—can be powerful tools to address women's poverty and reduce inequality. Social services, such as health care, child- and elder-care, and water and sanitation can have an even greater effect, as well as reducing the drudgery of unpaid care and domestic work.

WOMEN'S GREATER VULNERABILITY TO POVERTY IN CHANGING SOCIETIES

Women are particularly vulnerable to economic insecurity and financial dependence. Across the region, women are less likely than men to have access to personal earnings.

Large gaps are evident in pension benefits derived from earnings-related schemes: in Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia, mean pension income for single women is just above or equal to the poverty line.

WOMEN HAVE LESS ACCESS TO SOCIAL PROTECTION

Currently, 73 per cent of the world's population have only partial or no social protection. Women are over-represented in this group.

Women are less likely than men to receive a pension in old age, and where they do their benefit levels are usually lower. Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia have relatively high coverage rates in some countries, yet important gender gaps remain: In Albania, 61 per cent of women above statutory pension age receive an old-age pension, compared to 100 per cent of men; the figures are 79 and 83 per cent in Azerbaijan; and 44 and 85 per cent in Croatia.

For the limited number of countries with data in the region, active pension scheme contributions rates of the working-age population are relatively high overall, and gender gaps vary.

In some countries, the proportion of the working-age population contributing to a pension scheme is higher among men than women: in Turkey, men contribute

44 per cent compared to 12 per cent of women; and in Croatia, men contribute 55 per cent compared to 47 per cent of women. In Hungary, contributions for both men and women are equal, at 71 per cent.

SOCIAL TRANSFERS ARE ESSENTIAL FOR REALIZING WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Social transfers reduce poverty among single mothers by, for example, 34 per cent in Poland, 25 per cent in the Czech Republic, and 24 per cent in Hungary.

The design, scope and impact of social pension programmes varies greatly between countries and across regions. In some countries in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, access is contingent on various conditionalities, such as in Ukraine where access is conditional on a means test with varying income thresholds, usually defined at the household level.

ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE SOCIAL SERVICES ARE JUST AS IMPORTANT

Accessible, affordable, gender-responsive social services reduce poverty and inequality. Social services can have an even greater effect on poverty and inequality than that of social transfer systems, and can reduce the demands of unpaid care and domestic work on women.

Access barriers to social and health services remain large for women

There are glaring disparities in service provision globally. In 2012, governments in the Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia region spent \$1,105 (PPP) per capita (4.4 per cent of GDP) on average on the health of their citizens, compared to a global average of \$1,121 (PPP) per capita (6.5 per cent of GDP).

Latest available data shows a regional average of 11.8 per cent of GDP spent on public social security, which is the second highest after the Developed Regions.

Average out-of-pocket (OPP) health expenditure as a percentage of total health expenditure was 30.2 per cent in 2012 in Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, compared to 22.2 per cent globally.

Although women from poor households are most likely to forego treatment, a study from Latvia also found significant gender gaps in unmet needs for health services among higher-income groups. Current cutbacks in public health expenditure threaten to increase the financial burden on households. For example, between 2007 and 2011, OPPs for health care increased by 8 per cent in the Ukraine.

Across regions, distant health care services are a major barrier to access for many women, particularly those in rural areas, due to transportation costs and safety risks, for instance. Many rural women report problems accessing health care services because facilities are too far away: 35 per cent in Tajikistan, 29 per cent in Armenia, and 25 per cent in Kyrgyzstan.

37 per cent of women in Tajikistan, 6 per cent of women in Kyrgyzstan and 5 per cent of women in Armenia report that they do not make the final decision on their own health care, as they often need to obtain consent from family members to seek medical care.

Care services

Coverage for early childhood education and care (ECEC) is particularly low among Eastern European countries, where public support for family-friendly policies declined significantly with the transition from state socialism to a market economy.

Water and sanitation

Stigmatization can result in social exclusion from water and sanitation services: in Slovenia, the requirement of proof of ownership or authorized occupation for receiving municipal services has been a major barrier to Roma communities' access to water.

By waiving these requirements, all but three of the 38 Roma settlements in Prekmurje region, for example, have gained access to water and sanitation.

3/ TOWARDS AN ENABLING MACROECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

Macroeconomic policies can and should support the realization of women's rights, by creating dynamic and stable economies, by generating decent work and by mobilizing resources to finance vital public services.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ECONOMIC GROWTH AND GENDER EQUALITY

Gaps in labour force participation are associated with lower growth rates overall. In Central Asia, gender gaps in the labour market reduce GDP per capita by 11 percent.

However, in some cases *gender inequality* fuels growth. Virtually all economies rely on the unpaid care and domestic work that is largely provided by women.

Firms, for example, depend on the human resources that are produced and sustained through such work. The unequal distribution of the costs of care therefore supports economic growth.

Evidence suggests that growth alone is not enough to advance either sustainable economic prosperity or substantive equality. Instead, macroeconomic policies need to look beyond economic growth and work together with social policy to bring about transformative and inclusive economies that work for women—and indeed all members of society.

UNPAID CARE WORK UNDERPINDS ECONOMIC GROWTH AND MUST BE RECOGNIZED AND SUPPORTED

The work involved in caring for people is essential for reproducing the labour force and generates real economic value. Despite the benefits to society, the unpaid care work predominantly performed by women is not incorporated into the calculation of GDP or reflected in other macroeconomic indicators, or taken into account in economic policymaking.

Although there is no data available for this region, studies show that the total value of unpaid care work is estimated to range between 10 per cent (Argentina) and 39 per cent (India) of GDP.

MOBILIZING RESOURCES TO FUND SOCIAL POLICIES

Governments need revenue to pay for social policies and corporations must pay their fair share. Resources should be mobilized and re-prioritized to ensure better outcomes with regard to gender equality. Expansion of the fiscal space is possible even in countries with lower levels of GDP.

Although typically seen as a technocratic process, macroeconomic policy should be defined with direct participation by the different social groups affected, including women's organizations. This requires transparency and open access to information about the decision making process.

Governments however, vary in the degree of transparency. For example, the Czech Republic is rated moderately high with respect to budget transparency. In contrast Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have relatively low levels of budgetary transparency.