



Global challenges of gender responsive recovery and employment

Session 2: Recovery and gender equality: What are the gender responsive policy solutions to address the deepening inequalities?

Christine Hofmann, ILO Team Lead Skills for Social Inclusion

Content

- I. The gendered effects of the pandemic**
- II. The role of labour market policies to cushion the effects**
- III. Policy priorities to build forward fairer**
- IV. Country examples**



I. The gendered effects of the pandemic

Percentage change in employment rate due to the pandemic



Source: ILO calculations based on ILOSTAT, ILO modelled estimates.

Globally, between 2019 and 2020, **women's employment declined by 4.2 per cent**, representing a drop of 54 million jobs, while **men's employment declined by 3 per cent**, or 60 million jobs. In addition, 30 million jobs have not been created – a **global shortfall of 144 million jobs**.

▶ The COVID-19 crisis has disproportionately affected women – and worsened existing inequalities

Women were overrepresented in the sectors severely impacted: accommodation and food services, wholesale and retail trade; real estate, business and administrative activities, manufacturing

Informal employment in hard-hit sectors is also higher among women, **with 42 per cent of women working informally** compared **with 32 per cent of men.**

Higher-wage jobs (more often held by men) could shift more easily to **full-time telework**, this has **not been the case for the many women in low-wage jobs**, such as retail, sales and hospitality

The additional burden of unpaid care work during the pandemic (sickness and school closures) also fell greatly on women (4 hours, 25 minutes per day on average for a women versus 1 hour, 23 minutes for a man, **pre-pandemic**), with **repercussions for physical and mental health**

Women have lower access to social protection – already pre-pandemic.

Increase in violence and harassment have also made it difficult for women to keep their jobs, compared to men.

The digital divide is affecting women more severely and impeding women's employment recovery

Covid-19 has increased the push towards **digitalization of** businesses, and services, including skills and employment services globally

At **household level, digital devices are often shared**, and men might be given priority

Public Employment Services have also **digitalized services**, and while technology can be a tool for inclusion, **disparities persist**

Low digital skills can be a **serious obstacle to access services** for young people from vulnerable backgrounds, in particular, for young women



June 2021

The internet is becoming a key resource for job seekers, entrepreneurs or those looking to make a career change. To ensure they remain inclusive, PES should be aware of the barriers limiting access to clients with low digital literacy and pinpoint solutions for making services easy to access, safe and as intuitive as possible.

Job searching is going digital but connectivity gaps persist

Digitalization is global and influences every aspect of people's lives. Job searching and recruitment methods are also evolving and going digital. The COVID-19 crisis has accelerated the role of technology and the way in which public employment services (PES) facilitate participation in the labour market, whether in salaried jobs, self-employment or a combination of both.

Today, [50 per cent](#) of the world's population uses the internet for multiple purposes, including job searching (IUN 2020). However, there are still wide disparities in broadband access across regions and groups of the population. The majority of people with limited access to digital technologies live and work in developing countries. Many are women, persons with disabilities, older workers, and low-income young people in Sub-Saharan Africa, South-East Asia and the Pacific region (ITUC-UNESCO 2019).

Digital inequalities have prevented many people from shifting to remote working and receiving skills training since the start of the lockdown owing to the pandemic. Access to government support for returning to work, remaining in education or accessing training can be facilitated by new technologies. PES can play a crucial role

in enhancing basic digital skills for jobseekers, or those wishing to change career or start an apprenticeship or internship.

PES digitalization accelerated in response to the COVID-19 crisis

As part of the digital transformation taking place in the world of work, PES are embracing digital technologies to better match people to jobs. This is occurring, however, with varying degrees of development and investment. According to the International Labour Organization, PES in 69 countries across all regions have capacity to provide basic services online, such as information on open vacancies and registration of clients for job-matching. One third of PES in these countries are already offering AI-driven solutions to jobseekers and employers (ILD 2020).

Even in developing countries where digital networks are poorly developed, mobile connectivity is already the main gateway to the web and job vacancies available online. Most PES moved their intermediation services and labour market programmes online or provided them by telephone to increase support and ensure delivery (ILD 2020b), following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, and this trend is likely to continue beyond the crisis.

Technology is a tool for inclusion but disparities persist

The digital transformation of PES can increase equal access to opportunities to work for all. Placement and recruiting technologies can also benefit employers by saving time and reducing costs, particularly in a context of an economic recovery. Digital technology has been a powerful tool for

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_814289.pdf

► Inequalities in employment start in education and training

- Persistent **gender disparities in TVET enrolments** of women due to barriers to education and training, especially in rural and informal economies and **socio-cultural and economic constraints**
- **Occupational choices** and opportunities remain gender-biased, and **low representation of women in STEM subjects**
- **Drop-out rates of women** are higher in male-dominated training programmes, and higher during the pandemic
- Female-dominated training programmes lead more often to **lower-productivity and lower-paying jobs**.

Gender pay gap still stands at 19% globally – despite advances in education and training
It only shrunk by 2 percentage points over the last three decades
Biggest effect because lower wages are paid to work of equal value and due to occupational gender segregation



International
Labour
Organization

► ILO brief

► Policy Brief

August 2020

► The gender divide in skills development: Progress, challenges and policy options for empowering women

Key findings:

- Gender gaps persist globally in women's access to skills development and participation in the labour market. The main challenges women face include gender biases in occupational choices; barriers to education and training, especially in rural and informal economies; socio-cultural and economic constraints; and low representation of women in STEM subjects. To address these challenges, countries need to: i) induce a gender focus in national skills development policies and strategies; ii) create gender-sensitive training environments; iii) create opportunities for women in technology-intensive areas; iv) create opportunities for men in social and care work; v) promote role models; and vi) encourage and enable women to participate in lifelong learning opportunities.
- In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, women and girls are bearing the brunt of care responsibilities during school closures. Overcoming the gender digital divide is essential to allow women to participate equally in digital learning and teleworking where possible – in addition to challenging traditional gender roles.

The gender gap in education and employment: What progress has been made?

If you are a woman, you might be lucky enough to live in one of the 76 countries in the world where women are no longer at a disadvantage to participate in education: 'we even if you do, you are still less likely to find a job than your male counterpart.

Even for certain countries where female participation is still low, girls are catching up with boys in primary school enrolment. For secondary education, approximately the



Portrait of Victoria Namukuru, 17-year-old and mother of two. Photograph by Crystal Liu.

1. This section uses secondary data from ILO's Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment Index (GEI) and the Gender Inequality Index (GII) to assess the gender gap in education and employment. The data is based on the most recent available data for each country. The figure shows the gender gap in education and employment, which is calculated as the difference between the male and female participation rates in education and employment. The figure shows the gender gap in education and employment, which is calculated as the difference between the male and female participation rates in education and employment.

https://www.ilo.org/skills/pubs/WCMS_244380/lang-en/index.htm

► The COVID-19 crisis could have long-lasting effect on female employment

There is a risk of reversing gender equality gains made in recent decades and deepening existing gender inequalities in the labour market:



- Gender is a **rationing mechanism** when jobs are scarce
- Push for labour market flexibility and deregulation can lead to the **expansion in women's precarious employment**
- When women lose jobs, their **unpaid care work usually increases**
- Women are often **left behind in sectoral recovery policies**: labour-intensive sectors supported, typically male-dominated, to the detriment of female-dominated sectors like care services.
- As a result of school closures and loss in family income, many children have faced a **higher risk of child labour**, especially young girls

II. The role of labour market policies to cushion the effects

While **advanced economies** focused on social protection schemes including unemployment benefits, **developing countries** provided income support to vulnerable workers.

Labour market policies and programmes have been critically important in assisting workers and employers **to deal with redundancies, furloughs or reduced work schedules** as a result of COVID-19.

Active labour market policies (ALMPs) – often delivered through Public Employment Services (PES) - were and continue to be **key elements** of the policy toolbox in **preserving jobs and skills, facilitating employment in essential production and services, and keeping people connected to the labour market**, including disadvantaged workers in the informal economy and new forms of employment.

During the pandemic, women fared considerably better in countries that took measures to prevent them from losing their jobs, in particular through employment retention benefits

III. Policy priorities to build forward fairer for a human-centred recovery

Integrate **gender concerns into national skills and employment policies and measures** to maintain women in the labour force and facilitate women's re-entry into employment

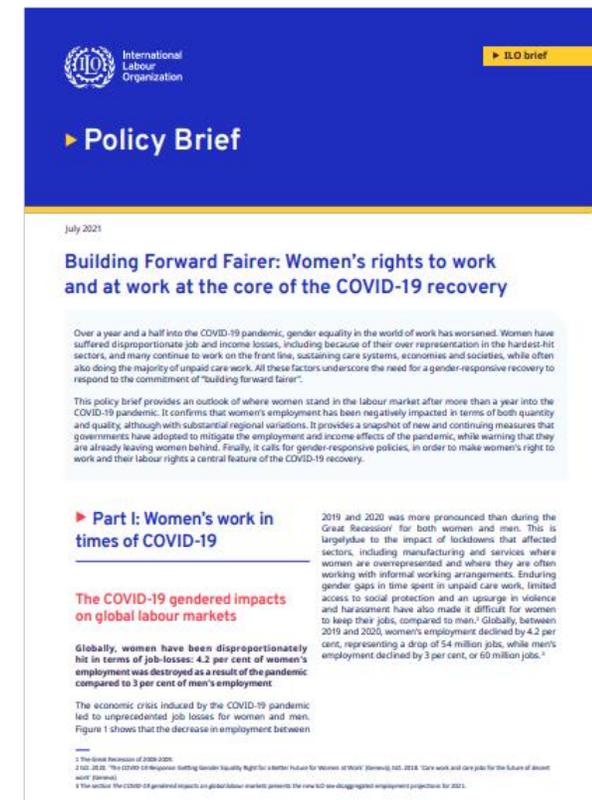
Assess and understand **women's and men's distinctive barriers** to skills and jobs

Macroeconomic stimulus packages need to continue boosting aggregate demand in ways that support employment retention and creation, with a specific focus on women's employment and incomes.

Promote **inclusive skills and lifelong learning** in all sectors, in particular in **technology-intensive fields for women**, and **in social and care work for men**; create gender-sensitive training environments

Strengthen **gender-responsive ALMPs, including counselling, mentoring and positive role models**, and recognition of prior learning (RPL)

Invest in care services



https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---gender/documents/publication/wcms_814499.pdf

▶ IV. Country examples of gender-responsive policy solutions

In **Argentina and Botswana**, governments provided **wage subsidies** in return for a guarantee to avoid dismissals during a set period.

In **Colombia and Chile**, **wage subsidies** were applied to new hires, with greater subsidy rates for women.

Both developed and developing countries established or expanded **public employment programmes**. In **Mexico and in Kenya**, quotas were established to guarantee that women benefit from these programmes

Colombia and Senegal have created or strengthened **support for women entrepreneurs**.

In the **Republic of Korea**, the PES worked closely with **Occupational Centres for Women** to link job search support and training with a special maternity leave allowance and childcare subsidies, plus provide **employer subsidies for retention**.



 **Thank you**

hofmann@ilo.org