

WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT IN THE CHANGING WORLD OF WORK

- AN OVERVIEW FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

BACKGROUND PAPER



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Acronyms and abbreviations

AAL	Average Annual Loss
AEC	ASEAN Economic Community
ADB	The Asian Development Bank
ASEAN	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing
CEDAW	The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSW	Commission on the Status of Women
EAP	East Asia and the Pacific
FLFP	Female Labour Force Participation
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GSMA	Groupe Spéciale Mobile Association
ICTs	Internet and Communication Technologies
ILO	The International Labour Organization
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IT-BPM	IT-Business Process Management
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
NSFE	Non-Standard Forms of Employment
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PIS	Priority Integration Sector
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SER	Standard Employment Relationship
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
SME	Small and Medium Sized Enterprise
SPI	Social Protection Index
TUD	Time Use Data
UNESCAP	The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UN Women	The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
WB	The World Bank
WEF	World Economic Forum

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Section I: Introduction¹

Women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work: An introduction

This paper was commissioned by UN Women and ESCAP with a view to locating the growing concern with inclusive growth and women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work. Inclusive growth, as a shared goal in the Asia-Pacific region, is a growth that ensures opportunities for all sections of the population with a special emphasis on the poor, particularly women and young and indigenous people, who are most likely to be marginalized. Central to both UN Women and ESCAP's agenda is a concern with decent jobs and the promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises. Women's entrepreneurship development is about women creating jobs and enterprises and generating decent incomes for themselves, their families and others. In all aspects of the labour market, women are greatly disadvantaged in comparison to men².

The paper is structured around four sections highlighting the essential need to address gender-based inequalities in order to understand an economy that is able to yield inclusive growth. Chapter two is concerned with the current and projected macroeconomic landscape and its implications for women's work in Asia and the Pacific. Making use of a gender lens when possible, it discusses the economic development and outlook for the region as well as its social protection expenditure, risks and vulnerabilities for the future of work in Asia and the Pacific and the economic impact of climate change. Chapter three focuses on issues of formality, informality and social protection by outlining trends in gender inequalities in paid and unpaid work and discussing future implications of women's labour force participation, social protection and non-standard forms of employment. Chapter four examines the changing world of work with an emphasis on the implications of technological advancements for productive and reproductive work. It also discusses the implications of job polarization and transformation, the impact of technological advancement on care work, and the association of technological upgrading with defeminization. Chapter five concludes by providing recommendations with support of the discussions carried out in the previous chapters.

Women's economic empowerment is directly tied to the status and terms and conditions of their paid and unpaid work, and to the opportunities that exist in labour markets. Extensive scholarship, numerous recent research and policy publications of note, including the report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Women's Economic Empowerment, and global policymaking in the form of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (notably, SDG 5, Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, and SDG 8, Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work

¹ This background paper was prepared by Francisco Cos-Montiel and Anna Eknor.

² Finnegan, G. (2016). *Women's Entrepreneurship Development – A powerful route to Women's Economic Empowerment*. UN Women. Expert Group Meeting: Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work. Geneva, Switzerland. 26-28 September 2016.

for all) affirm these key relationships. Yet over the past several decades, trends and indicators of women's employment and their labour conditions in the changing world of work, while registering some positive gains, remain stubbornly negative. Unemployment and underemployment are rising in many parts of the world, social protections and labour rights are being eroded and pressures on unpaid work are increasing in response to austerity measures, aging populations, rising dependency ratios and climate change. For instance, in the global North, jobs are outsourced and informalized in tandem with the expansion of the "gig" and service economies. Whereas in the global South, the vast majority of workers continue to labour in insecure, vulnerable and informal forms of work. Technological change is accelerating job growth in services, communications, healthcare and manufacturing, providing jobs gains for some but accentuating employment inequalities and job loss for others. While the young and educated stand to gain in middle and higher income countries, the old, poor, rural and low income economy populations remain largely excluded from the benefits of this technological change³. Women, in particular women working in labour sectors that will develop technologically, also stand to lose out in this development as technological upgrading is associated with defeminization^{4, 5, 6}.

The effectiveness of the paths for Inclusive Growth will be a major concern in the next years as countries and development agencies work towards the achievement of the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. The global policy context for this paper is also underpinned by the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW); the Beijing Platform for Action; the conclusions of the Commission on the Status of Women 60 in 2016; the International Labour Organization (ILO), including its policy for decent work; and the UN Statistical Commission work on gender statistics⁷. There are achievements and remaining challenges associated with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Although the gender gap in education was closed, gender gaps remain in employment, with only half of women of working age currently in the global labour force as compared with three-quarters of men. In addition, there are further significant gaps in poverty and wages, as well as in participation in private and public decision-making.

That there is both an instrumental and an intrinsic rationale for an explicit focus on women within such an agenda is indicated by recent research and reports suggesting an asymmetry in the two-way relationship between gender equality and economic growth⁸. Evidence suggests

³ UN Women (2016) *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on the CSW 61 Priority Theme: Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work*. ILO Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland. 26 -28 September 2016.

⁴ McGowan, L. et al. (2016) *Women's Labour Rights and Economic Power, Now and in the Future*. UN Women. Expert Group Meeting: Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work. Geneva, Switzerland. 26-28 September 2016.

⁵ Kucera, D. and Tejani, S. (2014) *Feminization, Defeminization, and Structural Change in Manufacturing*. ILO, Geneva.

⁶ Tejani, S., and Milberg, W. (2010). Global defeminization? Industrial upgrading, occupational segmentation and manufacturing employment in middle-income countries. *Feminist Economics*, 22(2), 24-25.

⁷ Walby, S. (2016). *Cascading Crises and the World of Work: Implications for Women's Economic Empowerment and Decent Work*. UN Women. Expert Group Meeting: Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work. Geneva, Switzerland. 26-28 September 2016.

⁸ Kabeer, N. and Natali, L. (2013). Gender Equality and Economic Growth: Is There a Win-Win? *IDS Working Papers*, 2013 (417), 1-58

that there is fairly strong empirical support for the claim that gender equality has a positive impact on economic growth. The relationship is most consistent with regard to education (the most widely studied) and employment (less frequently studied), holding for a variety of different countries and across differing time periods over the past half century. These largely positive macro-level findings are supported by a wealth of micro-level evidence to suggest that not only does women's access to employment and education opportunities reduce the likelihood of household poverty but resources in women's hands have a range of positive outcomes for human capital and capabilities within the household⁹. Such findings suggest a strong instrumental rationale for ensuring women's participation in processes of growth: it will contribute to the inclusiveness of growth, not merely because women constitute 50 per cent of the world's population, but also because women's access to economic resources improves distributional dynamics within the household¹⁰.

Evidence on the converse relationship - that economic growth promotes gender equality - is far more mixed and indeed some of the fastest growing developing countries show the least signs of progress on basic gender equality outcomes. For example, in spite of the country's strong economic growth, the Female Labour Force Participation in India actually declined from 34.1 per cent in 1999-00 to 27.2 per cent in 2011-12¹¹. However, while economic growth on its own is not always sufficient to promote gender equality, the outcomes of growth appear to be far more positive where it is accompanied by an expansion in women's employment and education. In the context of Asia and the Pacific, the rapid change of technology and the ways in which it defines employment can dramatically change the way we look at how the benefits of growth, development and prosperity are shared. These transformations hold great potential but at the same time can increase the social and economic tensions in recent decades including development paradoxes such as a reduction in absolute poverty with an increase in inequality. Outlined below are some key trends and issues concerning women's employment in different sectors.

Agricultural sector

Today, approximately one quarter of the world's women workers are engaged in agricultural activities in rural areas, making up more than 40 per cent of all agricultural workers¹². The global average is dominated by Asia. Within Asia, the sub-regional averages range from about 35 per cent in South Asia to almost 50 per cent in East and Southeast Asia¹³. The Asian average is dominated by China, where the female share of the agricultural labour force has increased

⁹ Quisumbing, A. R., & Maluccio, J. A. (2003). Resources at marriage and intrahousehold allocation: Evidence from Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Indonesia, and South Africa. *Oxford Bulletin of Economics and Statistics*, 65(3), 283-327.

¹⁰ Kabeer, N. and Natali, L. (2013). Gender Equality and Economic Growth: Is There a Win-Win? *IDS Working Papers*, 2013 (417), 1-58

¹¹ Verick, S. (2014) *Women's Labour Force Participation in India: Why is it so Low?* International Labour Organization.

¹² UN Women (2016) *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on the CSW 61 Priority Theme: Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work*. ILO Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland. 26 -28 September 2016.

¹³ The SOFA Team and Doss, C. (2011). *The Role of Women in Agriculture*. ESA Working Paper No. 11-02, March 2011. Agricultural Development Economics Division, FAO.

slightly during the past three decades. The female share in India has remained steady at just over 30 per cent. These very large countries mask changes in some smaller countries where the female share of the agricultural labour force appears to have increased dramatically, now exceeding 50 per cent in Bangladesh. Other Asian countries such as Malaysia have however seen declining female labour shares in agriculture. In Malaysia, 72 per cent of women are employed in the service sector¹⁴, reflecting a shift from agriculture to service in line with the country's advancement in economic development stages.

The FLFP in agriculture in the region calls for special attention due to women's frequent disadvantage within the sector. Most Asian women farmers are involved mainly in subsistence farming, and face several challenges in moving beyond the subsistence level to access export markets in the ASEAN Member States. Compounding this, is the fact that credit for agricultural purposes is hard to access for women because their lack of asset ownership and low education levels in comparison to men¹⁵. The case of Bangladesh is furthermore an illustrative example of another central problem the FLFP in agriculture, namely that it is largely consists of unpaid and vulnerable employment types. Low-paying and seasonal, agricultural work is one of the three most hazardous sectors for workers (along with construction and mining). Despite their predominance in the sector, women are paid up to 40 per cent less than their male co-workers for doing the same job. The precariousness of this work is compounded by informal employment arrangements or agreements with labour brokers, violence and harassment on the job, and the unpredictability of labour demand.

Manufacturing sector

Such precarious conditions are also characteristics of women's employment in the manufacturing sector. While there are fewer women workers in manufacturing, they are the majority of workers in certain industries, such as garments and electronics. In the near future, work in these sectors will be affected dramatically by technological advancement, displacing a big share of the workforce that is typically female. This has already begun in some places, such as in the Republic of Korea, Malaysia and Taiwan, China, where technological upgrading in different manufacturing industries has displaced female labour force¹⁶.

Service sector

Over 40 per cent of the global female labour force is concentrated in services, with women making up more than 55 per cent of service sector employment. The terms and conditions of work vary greatly in services, which spans the gamut of technical and communications services, retail and petty trade, to healthcare and personal services. The largest increase in women's

¹⁴ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (2016). *Projected Gender Impact of the ASEAN Economic Community*. The ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta.

¹⁵ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (2016). *Projected Gender Impact of the ASEAN Economic Community*. The ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta.

¹⁶ Kucera, D. and Tejani, S. (2014) *Feminization, Defeminization, and Structural Change in Manufacturing*. ILO, Geneva.

employment in the services sector can be seen in East Asia, where the share of women employed has increased from 32.7 to 77.0 per cent over the last 20 years. Yet even as service sector employment expands in the changing world of work, women remain concentrated in lower earning segments with lower job tenure and greater insecurity¹⁷.

Within all sectors – agriculture, manufacturing, services – there is striking occupational segregation with women typically occupying the lowest occupational categories within each sector, earning less and having fewer entitlements to social security and pensions. The ILO notes that occupational segregation has increased further over the past two decades, particularly in response to skill-biased technological change. Between 1995 and 2015, employment increased fastest in emerging economies. Yet the absolute change in employment levels was twice as high for men as for women (382 million for men and 191 million for women).

Care economy sector

When it comes to the economy that reproduces social and economic life, women and girls do nearly 2.5 times as much unpaid work than men globally, especially in providing care for family and communities, which creates tremendous value for the economy¹⁸. In Asia and the Pacific, women carry out a larger share of unpaid care work and domestic work than men do, but rates vary across the region, as seen in Table 1. For example, in the Republic of Korea, women spend about five times as much time on unpaid care and domestic work as men and in Pakistan, women spend ten times as much time on domestic work and care work¹⁹. The impact of this uneven division of unpaid care work and domestic work is compounded by the fact that when paid and unpaid work is combined, women tend to work more than men in total, often causing time poverty. This is particularly true for poor women, which will be further discussed in Section III²⁰.

¹⁷ UN Women (2016) *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on the CSW 61 Priority Theme: Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work*. ILO Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland. 26 -28 September 2016.

¹⁸ UN Women (2015). *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*. United States.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Floro, M. S., and King, E. M. (2016). The Present and Future of Time-Use Analysis in Developing Countries. *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*, 31(1), 5-42.

Table 1: A Gender Disaggregated Time Use Overview of Unpaid Care and Domestic Work in Selected Countries

Country	Unpaid care and domestic work (Minutes per day)	
	<i>Female</i>	<i>Male</i>
India	352	52
Pakistan	287	28
Cambodia	234	56
China	234	91
Republic of Korea	227	45
Bangladesh	216	84
Laos	150	36

UN Women (2015). *Progress of the World's Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*. United States.

Women's disproportionate share of unpaid care work limits their economic opportunities. The heavy and disproportionate burden of unpaid work inhibits women's physical and economic mobility, forecloses opportunities to learn and earn, reduces women's formal labour market participation, and reflects a deeply entrenched structural advantage enjoyed by men that transcends cultures. Austerity, financial crisis and the roll-back of social protection in the global North, aging and demographic shifts that contribute to rising dependency ratios, and the adverse impacts of climate change are among the current trends that increase women's burden of unpaid labour. Inadequate access to water supply, sanitation, and health-care services is a crucial factor behind the time spent by women on unpaid work and their disadvantaged position in the labour force.

Time Use Data (TUD) studies reveal a much wider range of economic contributions from women, men and children than conventional measures of economic activities, and elucidate hidden (statistically invisible) aspects of market work, such as time in job search, unpaid family labour (in family farms and enterprises), work that is temporary, atypical, and contingent (casual or home-based), and subsistence production. Incorporating these activities into the measure of economic production has yielded much higher estimates of aggregate production. Repeated measures of people's time-use patterns have shown shifts over time in the economic activities of men and women, between those who live in rural and urban areas, and across economic strata²¹. Indeed, TUD uncover the commonly hidden time dimensions of income poverty by exposing the time pressure faced by household members, particularly women and girls, who have to balance their expected duties in household work, caregiving and unpaid family work with the need to work for pay, attend school, or contribute to community activities.

²¹ Ibid.

Labour migration

Recent decades have seen a rapid growth of female labour migration, with tens of millions of women migrating yearly in search of work or in response to crisis and conflict. Of 231 million migrants around the world, there are approximately 60 million international migrants in countries across Asia and the Pacific. These migrants are from countries like Philippines and China²². Over 95 million migrants in the world come from countries of Asia and the Pacific. Most migrants are South-South migrants, as they go to neighbouring countries, or countries in the same sub-region²³. In the ASEAN region women make up a significant proportion of migrant workers overall, and in particular in sectors such as services and health work, and make up a majority of the workers in domestic work²⁴. In Indonesia, for example, the percentage of women migrant workers rose from 75 per cent in 2006 to 83 per cent in 2009, with over 90 per cent being domestic workers. A similar proportion of Lao women migrant workers are domestic workers and in 2011 women migrant workers outnumbered men in the Philippines at 217,830 to 181,145, of whom 135,870 were female domestic workers. Migrants frequently do not have the same labour rights as native workers and are often found in more insecure and precarious work. A significant concern is that many migrant women are channelled into domestic work and sweatshops in low-end manufacturing supply chains where labour regulations and protections either do not apply or are not enforced. In addition to this, labour trafficking of women and girls continues to be of grave concern. Unregulated and unethical labour brokers are a lead player in precarious hiring arrangements that exploit migrant women workers. These brokers funnel women into stereotypically “female” jobs in sweatshops and domestic work, often under difficult conditions²⁵.

Across continents and cultures, women face gender-based discrimination in both the private and public sphere, which leads to further inequality in the workplace. This gender-based discrimination is compounded by discrimination based on multiple and intersecting identities and characteristics, such as race, ethnicity, caste, class, sexual orientation, disability, nationality, migrant status, age and religion. Indeed, in some contexts, these identities expose women and girls to extreme levels of discrimination, including violence that is physical, sexual and/or psychological.

Outlook for the changing world of work for women

Rather than being empowered in this changing world of work, women continue to subsidize the market economy through their unpaid care work and through their undervalued, precarious and insecure paid work. But is this panorama likely to change? Will work in the future offer greater

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ The Asia-Pacific RCM Thematic Working Group on International Migration, including Human Trafficking (2015). *Asia-Pacific Migration Report 2015: Migrants' contributions to development*. Available at: <http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/SDD%20AP%20Migration%20Report%20report%20v6-1-E.pdf> [2017-02-04]

²⁵ UN Women (2016) *Report of the Expert Group Meeting on the CSW 61 Priority Theme: Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work*. ILO Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland. 26 -28 September 2016.

opportunities to women? Or will it continue to exacerbate the contradictions that have been observed, including the increasing number of women in the labour force but working in precarious conditions. Will technology offer more opportunities for women, liberating them from different burdens or will the technological development not be inclusive for women? As the care sector is one of the few large and vital sectors that is unlikely to be technologically developed, as well as expected to expand and demand an increased work force due demographic changes, will women be displaced from other sectors to the care sector due to ideas of that care work is female work and that technologically advanced work demands a male workforce?

As global technology platforms and digital integration create faster moving supply-chains, jobs in the global south are more and more integrated with consumer markets in the global north and increasingly subject to the vagaries of demand swings and recessions. Moreover, despite the potential for new jobs in emerging sectors, many global supply chains generate profits at the expense of a growing informal workforce labouring for piece rates and working excessive hours.

In this changing world of work, some entrenched exclusions continue: pronounced gender inequalities in labour markets persist and are very often exacerbated. Most worrisome is the fact that these trends will likely intensify rather than decrease. While the absolute number of poor women is likely to decrease, inequality will increase and vertical and horizontal segregation will remain stagnant.

There are structural barriers to women's economic empowerment such as the macroeconomic environment and decisions on public expenditure or the barriers that limit women's decent work and their full employment. But also, the burden of care and the cultural norms that prevent women's participation in the labour market and the redistribution of care work between men and women. Issues of women's agency are extremely relevant to increase women's leadership or entrepreneurial activities as well to allow for political organization to protect their rights as workers. Women's Economic Empowerment Interventions should address obstacles to women's agency whereas these are measurable like open discrimination or those that have with subjective aspects such as the the cultural norms of femininity and masculinity in those cases where they represent the explanatory variable for women's low economic participation. We have learnt that we engage with these norms explicitly and implicitly in our family upbringing and in terms of culture and the wider society.

To support substantive equality, economic and social policies need to work in tandem. Typically, the role of economic policies is seen primarily in terms of promoting economic growth, while social policies are supposed to address its 'casualties' by redressing poverty and disadvantage and reducing inequality. But macroeconomic policies can pursue a broader set of goals, including gender equality and social justice. Conversely, well-designed social policies can enhance macroeconomic growth and post-crisis recovery through redistributive measures that increase employment, productivity and aggregate demand.

As the result of thorough analysis by feminist economists today we know that because macroeconomic policy is treated as ‘gender-neutral’ it has, to date, failed to support the achievement of substantive equality for women. From a human rights perspective, macroeconomic policy needs to pursue a broad set of social objectives that would mean expanding the targets of monetary policy to include the creation of decent work, mobilizing resources to enable investments in social services and transfers and creating channels for meaningful participation by civil society organizations, including women’s movements, in macroeconomic decision-making. However, the policy of implementation has fallen short and the current political economy seems to be less conducive towards greater gender equality²⁶.

Public policy makers have increasingly acknowledged that addressing fiscal policy through a “gender lens” can account for why countries have differed so greatly in their gender outcomes. Chakraborty (2016) reminds us of the debate initiated by Amartya Sen when he claimed that millions of women were “missing” in China and India referring to the number of females who have died as a result of unequal access to intra-household resources, nutrition and health care²⁷. Gender budgeting – a component of fiscal policy – is ideally a fiscal innovation that translates gender commitments into fiscal commitments through identified processes, resources, and institutional mechanisms, and arrives at a desirable benefit incidence²⁸. It unpacks the “social content” of macro policies through a gender lens, which is pertinent for rapid economic progress, however the absence of data disaggregated by gender makes this analysis more difficult. Some of its experiences vary in terms of intensity on gender budgeting across countries, as well as the gender development. In Asia and the Pacific, some countries have taken the lead while others lag behind²⁹.

There is an urgent need to analyse the role of public policy in correcting the blatantly oppressive prejudices that run deep in society and result in female survival disadvantage, and the role of fiscal policy in upholding the right to life for girls and women. In its aim to give insight into the future world of work and to alert the reader to some of the trends we are foreseeing in Asia and the Pacific, this paper draws on current debates. The intent is not to imply that market forces and technology will dominate the future world of work, but to highlight the changes in the political economy and plausible future scenarios accompanied by issues that need to be heeded by governments, regional institutions, multilateral institutions and policymakers in order to create a world of work that is inclusive, sustainable and prosperous.

²⁶ UN Women (2015). *Progress of the World’s Women 2015-2016: Transforming Economies, Realizing Rights*. United States.

²⁷ Chakraborty, L. (2016). *Asia; A Survey of Gender Budgeting Efforts* (No. 16/150). International Monetary Fund.

²⁸ Chakraborty, L. (2016). *Fiscal Policy Practices for Women’s Economic Empowerment*. UN Women. Expert Group Meeting: Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work. Geneva, Switzerland. 26-28 September 2016.

²⁹ Ibid.

Section II: Macroeconomic landscape and its implications for women's work

Eight years after the 2008 global financial and economic crisis, the impact of low economic growth in developed economies continues to linger in Asia and the Pacific. Global aggregate demand remains weak and economic expansion in China, the engine of regional as well as global economic growth, is moderating, which has a spillover effect in the whole region. Progress in reducing poverty is slowing and inequalities are rising, while demographic pressures from an ageing population, an expanding middle class and rapid urbanization are posing complex economic, social, environmental and governance challenges. Added to these unfavourable phenomena is a sharp rise in private debt in some major economies as the region navigates through the impacts of depreciating currencies and rising interest rates in the United States³⁰.

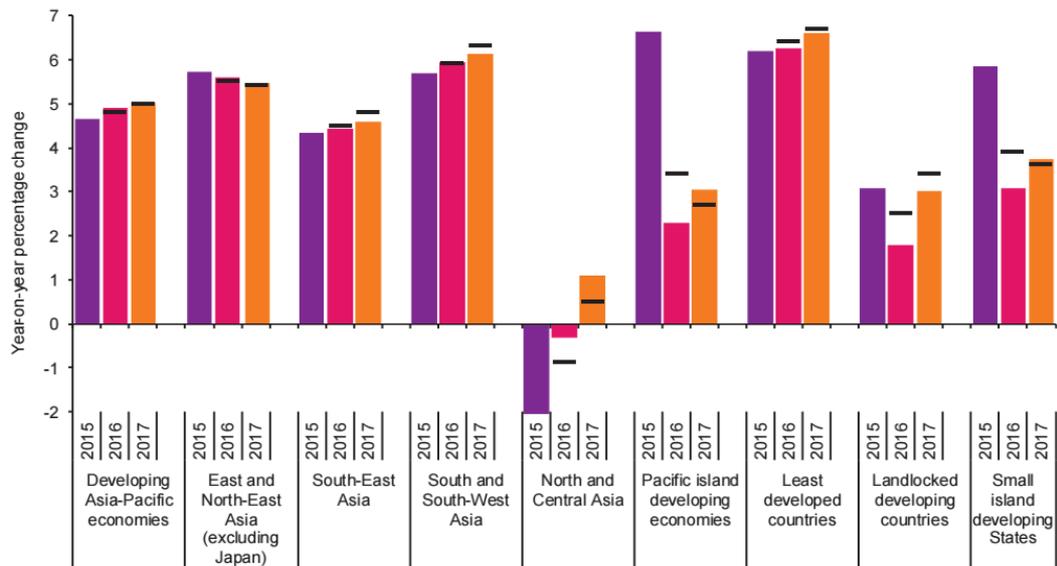
Macroeconomic landscape

Global trade continues to stagnate, while commodity prices have stabilized at historically low levels. At the same time, external financial conditions are more accommodative and stable than expected³¹. Advanced economy central banks have maintained loose monetary conditions or, as in Japan, engaged in further easing. Capital flows, exchange rates, and bond spreads across most of the region have steadied, following several bouts of market volatility, including soon after the U.K. Brexit vote. Growth developing in the Asian and Pacific region was broadly stable in the first half of 2016 and continues to perform well relative to other developing regions. Weak external demand was largely offset by robust domestic demand, supported by the stabilizing external financial conditions and accommodative monetary and fiscal policies. Adopting a longer perspective, growth in the region has been particularly resilient since the global financial crisis. Budget deficits have increased across much of the region, largely reflecting increased public expenditure, which is being used partly to scale up investment but also to meet growing current expenses. This has however not been reflected in an increase on social expenditure with the potential to benefit women, as public expenditure on investment tends to benefit infrastructure or those sectors that traditionally benefit men.

³⁰ *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2016: Nurturing productivity for inclusive growth and sustainable development*. UN ESCAP 2016, Bangkok.

³¹ The World Bank (2016). *East Asia and Pacific Economic Update October 2016: Reducing Vulnerabilities*. World Bank Publications: Washington DC.

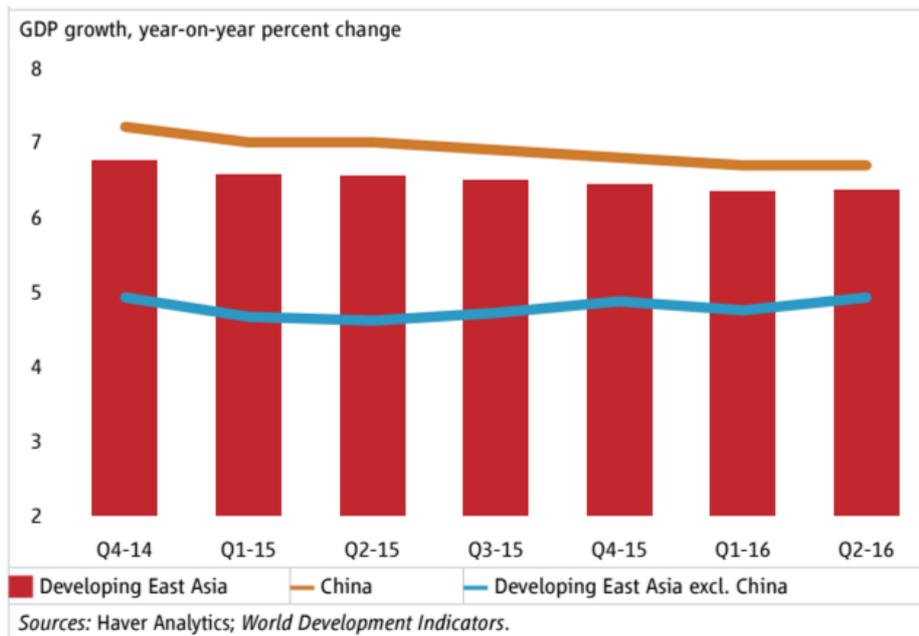
Figure 1: Real GDP growth, by ESCAP sub region and countries with special needs, 2015-2017



Source: ESCAP estimates for 2016 and forecasts for 2017.
 Note: Black line indicates the previous forecast reported in April 2016.

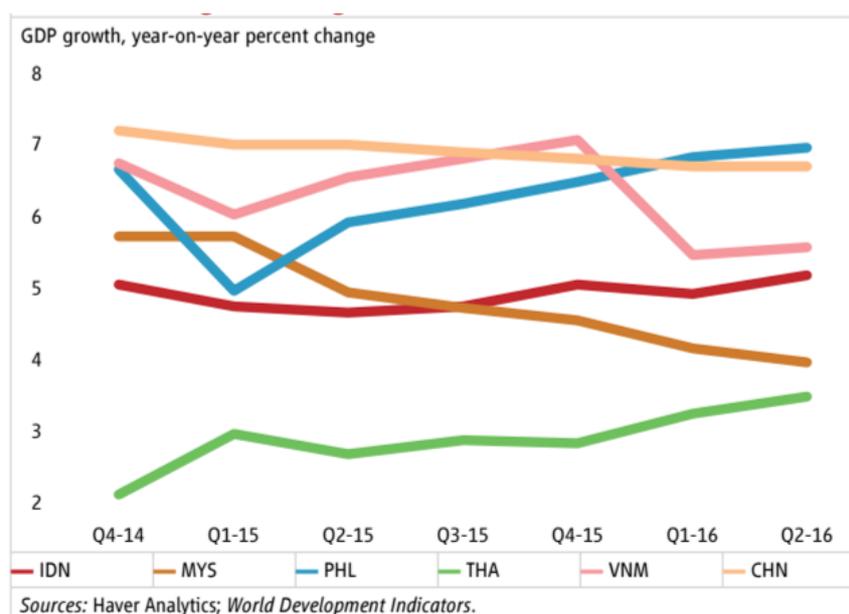
Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2016: Nurturing productivity for inclusive growth and sustainable development. UN ESCAP 2016, Bangkok.

Figure 2: Growth in developing EAP held steady in the first half of 2016



The World Bank (2016). *East Asia and Pacific Economic Update October 2016: Reducing Vulnerabilities.* World Bank Publications: Washington DC.

Figure 3: Growth performance varied across South East Asia’s large economies



The World Bank (2016). *East Asia and Pacific Economic Update October 2016: Reducing Vulnerabilities*. World Bank Publications: Washington DC.

Inflation remains muted across most of the region and growth is expected to remain resilient during 2016–18 in the region, reaching a multi-decade low of 3.7 per cent in 2016 compared with 4.1 per cent in 2015, however with differences across countries^{32,33}. In most of the large Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) economies, growth will likely pick up slightly. Favourable external financing conditions will be complemented by monetary and fiscal accommodation, with budget deficits projected to increase across much of the region. Continued low commodity prices will support domestic demand in the commodity importers, and contribute to a muted outlook for inflation across the region with salaries remaining stagnant.

Poverty, employment and inequality

Poverty in the region has declined rapidly in recent years (Figure 4), and is projected to fall further with continued growth; however, there remain significant challenges to inclusiveness³⁴. In 2015, the share of the region’s population living in poverty fell to 2.6 per cent (or, excluding China, to 5.6 per cent), from approximately 18 per cent a decade earlier, reflecting continued rapid growth. Poverty fell most sharply in China, Vietnam, and Cambodia, but has also decreased appreciably in Indonesia and Lao PDR. Still, there remain large numbers of

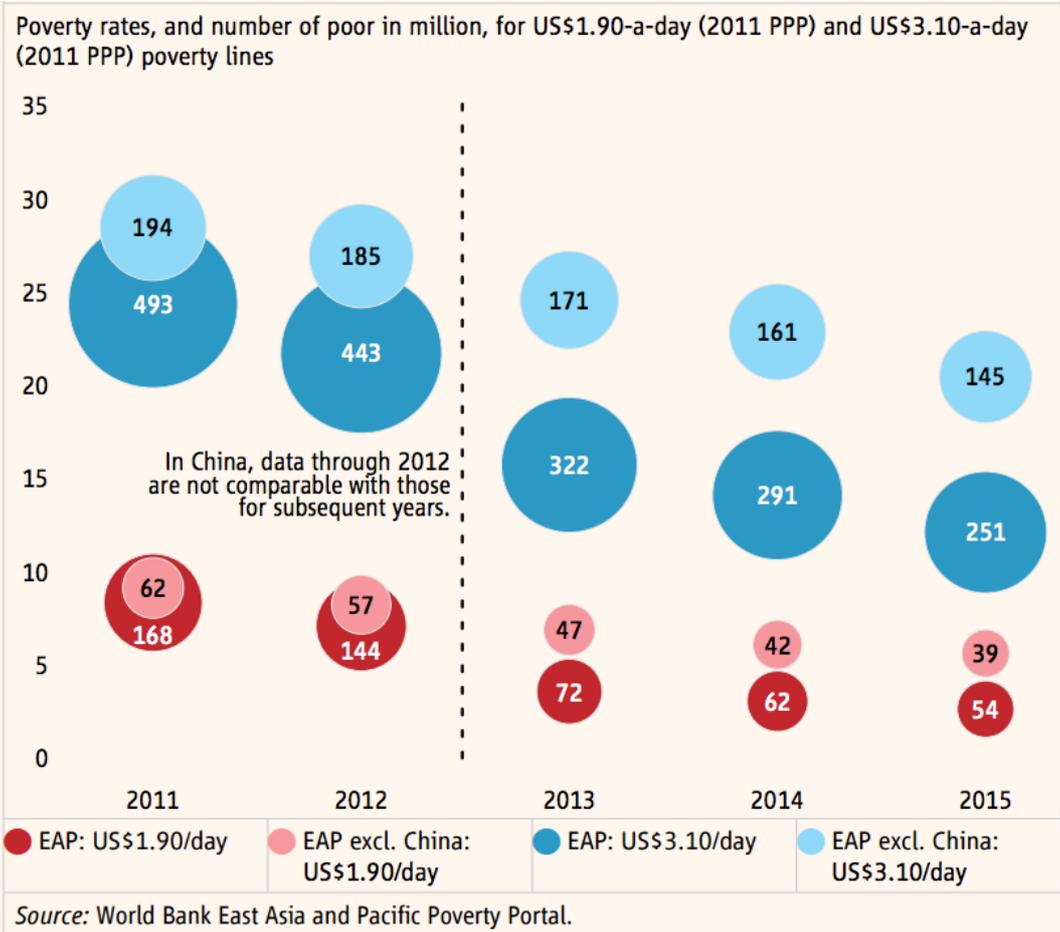
³² UN ESCAP (2016). *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2016: Year End Update*. UN ESCAP 2016, Bangkok.

³³ The World Bank (2016). *East Asia and Pacific Economic Update October 2016: Reducing Vulnerabilities*. World Bank Publications: Washington DC.

³⁴ UN ESCAP (2016). *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2016: Nurturing productivity for inclusive growth and sustainable development*. UN ESCAP 2016, Bangkok.

increasingly hard-to-reach poor in middle-income China, Indonesia, and the Philippines. In countries such as Vietnam, even though poverty has been almost eliminated, disadvantaged groups such as ethnic minorities are lagging behind by an often increasing margin³⁵.

Figure 4: The prevalence of poverty has continued to decline in East Asia and the Pacific



East Asia and Pacific Economic Update October 2016: Reducing Vulnerabilities. World Bank Publications: Washington DC.

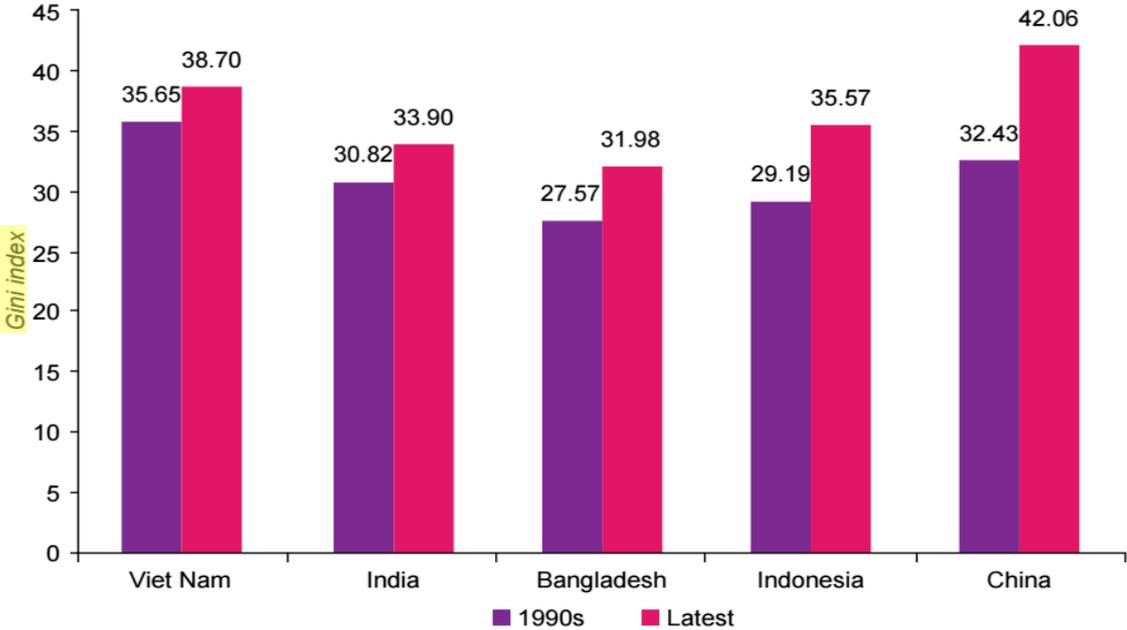
Nevertheless, relatively slow employment growth and a persistently high share of vulnerable employment have contributed to rising income inequality in Asia and the Pacific³⁶. The overall vulnerable employment rate was 55.4 per cent in 2015, down slightly from 55.7 per cent in 2014. Women are more likely than men to be in vulnerable jobs. For example, the vulnerable employment rate was 79.5 per cent for women and 71.7 per cent for men in South Asia. Likewise, in South-East Asia the rates were 60.1 per cent and 52.8 per cent for women and men, respectively. While the region continues to lead global economic growth, output

³⁵ The World Bank (2016). *East Asia and Pacific Economic Update October 2016: Reducing Vulnerabilities.* World Bank Publications: Washington DC.

³⁶ UN ESCAP (2016). *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2016: Year End Update.* UN ESCAP 2016, Bangkok.

expansion from globalization and technology has not been translated into commensurate increases in decent jobs in a number of countries. This contributes to concerns about the extent of poverty reduction and rising inequality in the region in particular among low income women. Available data on the post-crisis period indicate that some major developing economies, accounting for a large share of the population in the Asia-Pacific region, are experiencing a decelerating trend in the rate of poverty reduction. Similarly, indicators of income inequality have worsened in recent years and the outpacing of wage growth through increases in productivity in many developing economies in the region has led to more unequal distribution of incomes between capital and labour³⁷. The population-weighted Gini coefficient, based on household income estimates, has increased by almost 30 per cent in the region between 1990 and 2014 (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Gini coefficients of inequality in selected Asia-Pacific economies, 1990s and latest



Source: ESCAP, based on World Development Indicators of the World Bank.

Economic growth outlook

While the economic outlook for developing Asia-Pacific economies is broadly stable, it is also clouded by uncertainty. Economic growth in 2017 is forecast to increase marginally to 4.8 per cent and 5 per cent, respectively, from an estimated 4.6 per cent in 2015. Excluding China, growth is projected to remain stable in developing East Asia, and rise to 5 per cent in 2017 and 5.1 per cent in 2018. In China, growth is likely to continue easing steadily to 6.3 per cent in 2018³⁸. The ongoing reform process seeks to facilitate the rebalancing of the economy toward

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ The World Bank (2016). *East Asia and Pacific Economic Update October 2016: Reducing Vulnerabilities*. World Bank Publications: Washington DC.

consumption, services, and higher-value-added activities as part of a program to increase overall productivity. Output growth will moderate as excess industrial capacity is reduced, including by slowing the growth in credit to these sectors. Nevertheless, tightening labour markets will support continued growth in disposable income and private consumption. In terms of impacting FLFP, the reform process will mainly affect workers in more vulnerable employment types, and as women are overrepresented in these forms of employment this is likely to increase gender inequality.

Among other large economies, growth prospects are strongest in the commodity importers. Due to this, women's labour force participation is expected to increase but to concentrate in low productivity sectors and low paid jobs. In the Philippines, growth will likely accelerate, reflecting fiscal stimulus, rising public investment, and strong growth in services. In Indonesia, growth will increase steadily, despite low commodity prices, conditional on a pick-up in public investment and the success of efforts to improve the investment climate and increase revenues. In Thailand, growth will recover gradually, reflecting the effects of increased public investment, improving consumer confidence, and continued expansion in services including tourism. In Malaysia, however, growth fell sharply in 2016, as oil and manufactured exports are affected by weaker global demand, with a gradual recovery thereafter³⁹.

Among the smaller economies, the growth outlook has deteriorated markedly in some commodity exporters. Mongolia is projected to stagnate despite a large fiscal stimulus, as mineral exports weaken. Efforts to control the ballooning debt will act as a drag on growth in subsequent years. In Papua New Guinea, growth will fall sharply: production of copper is declining, the output of liquefied natural gas has reached a peak, and prices of both remain depressed. In contrast, growth will remain buoyant in Cambodia, assuming that garment exporters face off competitive threats from other low-cost producers; Lao PDR, as power exports continue expanding; and Myanmar, supported by increased investment and strong growth in transportation, banking, and telecommunications. The outlook for the small Pacific Island Countries will rely significantly on the development of regional fisheries and growth in tourism, but they remain vulnerable to risks arising from natural disasters, climate change, and terms-of-trade shocks. Additionally, the long-term outlook for growth and inclusion in the Pacific Island Countries hinges on their ability to maximize the benefits from their limited opportunities, including fisheries, migrant workers, and tourism.

Impact on women

However, there is very little information on how this economic performance in Asia and the Pacific will affect women's productive and reproductive work. One of the few sub regions that has conducted research on the impact of the current macroeconomic trends is South East Asia. A UN Women study found that while overall trade is expanding in both intra-ASEAN and extra-ASEAN markets, the value of women's share of exports has remained more or less constant. This pattern is reflective of the gender differentials in work force participation and

³⁹ Ibid.

the informalisation of women's work. Estimates of future pattern of female share of exports, employment and wages shows that gender differentials in these domains are likely to continue, in the absence of any immediate policy interventions to address the gender gaps⁴⁰.

In Asia and the Pacific, more women are employed in lower skilled and lower paying jobs than men in the ASEAN states, resulting in a persistent and high gender wage gap. This gender wage gap is not only apparent in the lower absolute numbers of women in the workforce, but also in the types of jobs that women perform. One of the main obstacles to women's economic empowerment is the gender segmented labour market causing women to not predominate in the sectors where growth in trade and employment is projected, and instead cluster in stagnating sectors such as agriculture and the garment industry. The persisting and major inequalities in women's labour force participation and in the care economy will act as effective barriers to accessing opportunities.

Women in Asia are on average 70 per cent less likely than men to be in the labour force, with the country-to-country percentage varying anywhere from 3 per cent to 80 per cent. This gap persists despite economic growth, decreasing fertility rates, and increasing education. In the 2014 Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum, there is a very pronounced disparity between Asia and the other regions of the world. Asia has some of the highest as well as some of the lowest-ranked countries in the index, which measures the share of women with the same level of access to men on the economic, education enrolment, health and survival, and political empowerment fronts. In particular, the Philippines ranks 9th globally while Pakistan ranks 141st amongst 142 countries⁴¹.

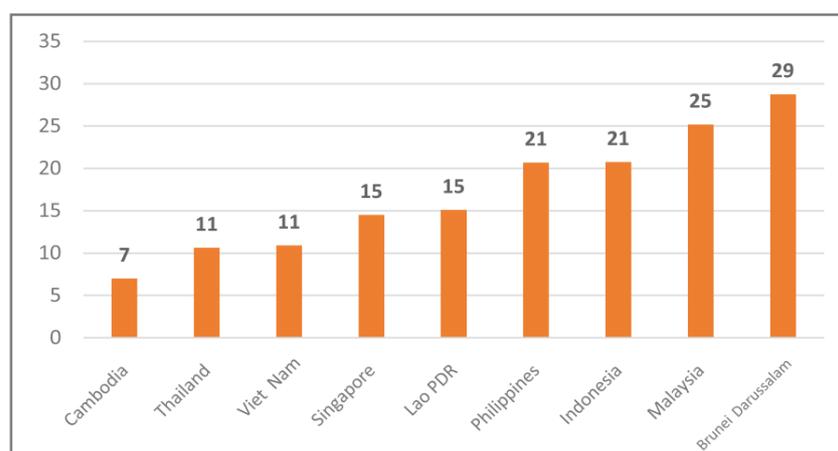
Studies show that increasing the presence of women in the workforce can have significant benefits for economic growth and welfare (Figure 6) in addition to the intrinsic values of equality. Lower levels of female labour force participation reduce the potential growth rates of an economy because the full potential of the complete labour force is not being utilized. Underutilization of the female half of the labour force therefore result in economic losses⁴².

⁴⁰ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (2016). *Projected Gender Impact of the ASEAN Economic Community*. The ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta.

⁴¹ Asian Development Bank (2015). *Women in the Workforce: An Unmet Potential in Asia and Pacific*. Asian Development Bank.

⁴² Dasgupta, S. and Verick, S. S. (2016). Introduction. In *Transformation of Women at Work in Asia: An Unfinished Development Agenda*, Dasgupta, S. and Verick, S. S. (Ed.) 1-23. Geneva: ILO Publishing/SAGE Publications India Private Limited, 2016.

Figure 6: GDP Losses due to Economic Gender Gaps in ASEAN Member States (per cent of GDP)



Source: Estimates by Cuberes and Teignier (2014). Losses are estimated for a particular year for each country and can thus be interpreted as a one-off increase in GDP if gender gaps were to be removed

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (2016). *Projected Gender Impact of the ASEAN Economic Community*. The ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta.

Economic risks and vulnerabilities

Despite recent stability, the likely impact of some risks for the near-term economic outlook should not be underestimated. Bouts of financial volatility can re-emerge given the unpredictable external environment. Key issues for this includes policy uncertainties in the wake of the forthcoming installation of a new administration in the United States of America on 20 January 2017 and the negotiations in Europe related to the planned U.K. Brexit. There are also vulnerabilities on the domestic front, such as in corporate and bank balance sheets. External demand is likely to remain weak, and there is concern that prolonged weakness in global trade could be a drag on productivity growth and the integration of developing countries in Asia and the Pacific that depend on extra regional trade, into global and regional value chains. Trade protectionist measures and sentiments, which are already on the rise, may increase further, harming export-oriented Asian economies and negatively affecting private investment⁴³.

Subdued global prospects make it critical for policy makers to address underlying financial and fiscal vulnerabilities, and to maintain fiscal space. The deteriorating outlook in high-income economies will have a persistent effect on regional exports, depressed world commodity prices will intensify challenges in commodity exporters, and significant risks to global activity could spill over into the region. Given the current labour market segregation this likely will affect more women than men. At the same time, unexpectedly accommodative global financial

⁴³ UN ESCAP (2016). *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2016: Year End Update*. UN ESCAP 2016, Bangkok.

conditions, such as access to financial markets, are temporarily extending the window of opportunity to address regional vulnerabilities⁴⁴.

Risks to growth

The region still faces significant risks to growth, including sluggish growth in advanced economies, subdued prospects in most developing economies and stagnant global trade. A sharp global financial tightening, stemming from a more rapid-than-expected normalization of monetary policy in the United States, or rising global risk aversion, would be associated with reduced capital inflows, U.S. dollar appreciation against regional currencies, and likely with increased financial volatility. As a result, debt-service burdens and debt-rollover risks would increase, especially for the large, financially integrated regional economies with sizable external, foreign-currency-denominated, and/or short-term debt, most notably Indonesia, Malaysia and, to a lesser degree, Thailand. In addition, growth fluctuations in high-income economies would have a significant impact on output in the more open regional economies. The ongoing slowdown and rebalancing process in China remains an important short-term risk to growth in the rest of the region, although over the longer term China's rebalancing will also generate opportunities for other countries. Rapidly rising levels of credit are an additional source of vulnerability across most large economies, most notably China, Malaysia, and Thailand. There is a growing risk of financial stress among corporates and households, which could spill over to the banking sector and lead to protracted slowdowns. Shocks to external financial conditions or to global growth would exacerbate these existing financial vulnerabilities.

Managing the fiscal risks

The crisis in the real economy cascades into government finances – the fiscal. The governmental response to the fiscal pressures was a site of debate and contestation. Some narratives attributed the increased deficit to excessive government expenditure on welfare, while others, such as that of the IMF, attributed the increased deficit to the decline in government income due to the recession caused by the financial crisis⁴⁵. The outcome varied between countries; involving 'austerity' and cuts in public expenditure.

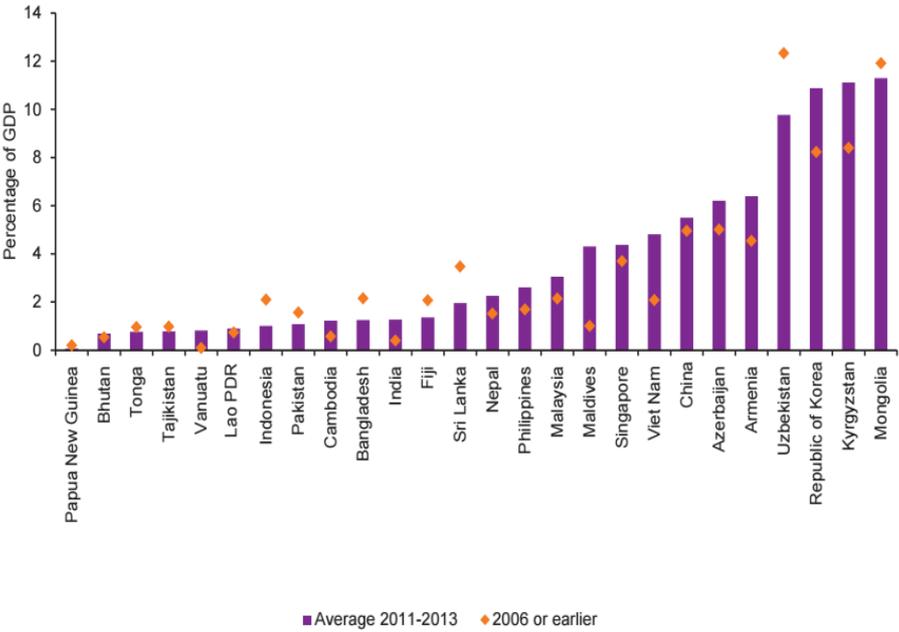
Austerity has typically had particularly detrimental effects for women. Women have borne the cuts in income support from the state through changes in tax and benefit systems to a larger extent than men. Cuts have disproportionately affected services on which mainly women depend, such as public services providing care and specialized services concerned with domestic and sexual violence. Social expenditures, which are important for inclusive and equitable growth, are increasing in the Asia-Pacific region, albeit from a low base. But while

⁴⁴ The World Bank (2016). *East Asia and Pacific Economic Update October 2016: Reducing Vulnerabilities*. World Bank Publications: Washington DC.

⁴⁵ Walby, S. (2016). *Cascading Crises and the World of Work: Implications for Women's Economic Empowerment and Decent Work*. UN Women. Expert Group Meeting: Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work. Geneva, Switzerland. 26-28 September 2016.

social protection expenditures in the region have been generally on the rise (Figure 7), such spending remains relatively low at an average of 5.3 per cent of GDP compared with the global average of 8.6 per cent. The Social Protection Index (SPI) for the region suggest that, despite steep GDP gains in recent decades, the majority of countries in Asia and the Pacific — particularly those that have graduated to middle-income status — have not correspondingly strengthened their systems of social protection. They need to scale up and broaden these systems. Spending that corresponds to 20 per cent of poverty-line expenditures or 5 per cent of its GDP per capita — as in the Republic of Korea — is a reasonable strategic target. Broadening the coverage of social insurance would be an important contribution to this effort. In general, women do not share equitably in the benefits from social insurance. Very few poor households are able to gain access to such contributory schemes. Even large segments of the non-poor, especially those working in the informal sector or in small enterprises, are not covered by such forms of insurance⁴⁶.

Figure 7: Social Protection Expenditures



Source: Asian Development Bank statistical database and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, social expenditure database.

The SPI for women, across Asia and the Pacific, is 0.046 and that for men is 0.064. So the SPI for women is only 41.8 per cent of the overall SPI (for both women and men). When the SPI for women is taken as a ratio of the overall SPI across the five regions of Asia and the Pacific, it ranges from 37.7 per cent (Pacific Islands) to 44.6 per cent (East Asia). Thus, East Asia

⁴⁶ Asian Development Bank (2013) *The Social Protection Index Assessing Results for Asia and the Pacific*. Asian Development Bank.

appears to have the greatest gender equity in social protection. Southeast Asia stands at 44.2 per cent, Central and West Asia 42.0 per cent, and South Asia 39.3 per cent.

Women in Asia and the Pacific benefit decidedly less from social insurance than from social assistance, largely owing to their lack of access to formal-sector employment, which is usually the prerequisite for being members of contributory insurance schemes. Women's SPI for social insurance is only 0.030 compared with men's 0.045. The overall SPI for social insurance is 0.075 (the summation of the two gender-related SPIs), so women's is only 40 per cent of the total. In contrast, women's SPI for social assistance is 0.015, almost as high as men's 0.017. The overall SPI for social assistance is 0.032. Hence, women account for about 47 per cent of all expenditures on social assistance per potential beneficiary.

The Social Protection Index (SPI) across Asia and the Pacific reveals that many countries appear to be underperforming a significant number; especially middle-income countries are spending far too little on social protection. Table 2 compares for each country its results on the SPI with its results on social protection expenditures as a ratio to GDP and its GDP per capita⁴⁷.

There is furthermore a positive relationship between a country's GDP per capita and its SPI in the Asia Pacific region (Figure 8). The figure also shows that many countries are not clustered close to the regression line. For the same general level of GDP per capita, in other words, some countries significantly exceed expectations while others significantly fall short.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

Table 2: The Social Protection Index, Social Protection Expenditures as Percentage of GDP, and GDP Per Capita, 2009

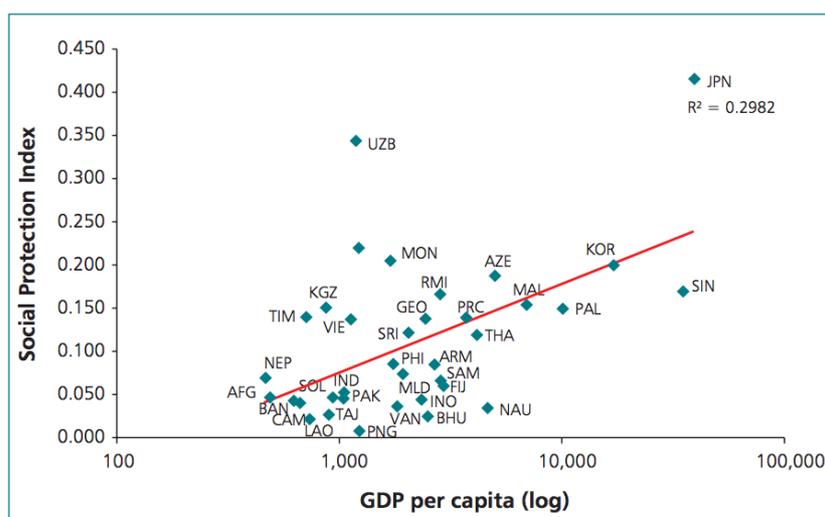
Country	SPI	SP Expenditures as % of GDP	GDP Per Capita at Current Prices (\$)
Japan	0.416	19.2	39,714
Uzbekistan	0.343	10.2	1,187
Mongolia	0.206	9.6	1,692
Korea, Rep. of	0.200	7.9	17,110
Azerbaijan	0.187	6.1	5,018
Singapore	0.169	3.5	35,514
Marshall Islands	0.167	4.8	2,838
Malaysia	0.155	3.7	6,915
Kyrgyz Republic	0.151	8.0	871
Palau	0.148	4.6	10,131
Timor-Leste	0.140	5.9	710
China, People's Rep. of	0.139	5.4	3,734
Viet Nam	0.137	4.7	1,130
Georgia	0.137	6.4	2,455
Sri Lanka	0.121	3.2	2,057
Thailand	0.119	3.6	4,151
Philippines	0.085	2.5	1,746
Armenia	0.085	2.2	2,666
Maldives	0.073	3.0	6,174
Nepal	0.068	2.1	463
Samoa	0.066	2.3	2,863
Fiji	0.060	1.7	2,945
India	0.051	1.7	1,043
Pakistan	0.047	1.3	926
Afghanistan	0.046	2.0	488
Solomon Islands	0.045	1.3	1,048
Indonesia	0.044	1.2	2,335
Bangladesh	0.043	1.4	617
Tajikistan	0.039	1.2	668
Bhutan	0.036	1.2	1,852
Nauru	0.034	0.9	4,599
Lao People's Democratic Republic	0.026	0.9	904
Vanuatu	0.025	0.7	2,471
Cambodia	0.020	1.0	731
Papua New Guinea	0.005	0.1	1,226

GDP = gross domestic product, SP = social protection, SPI = Social Protection Index.

Sources: ADB Statistical Database System (2012); ADB staff estimates based on SPI country reports.

Asian Development Bank (2013). *The Social Protection Index Assessing Results for Asia and the Pacific*. Asian Development Bank.

Figure 8: Social Protection Index and GDP Per Capita, 2009



AFG = Afghanistan, ARM = Armenia, AZE = Azerbaijan, BAN = Bangladesh, BHU = Bhutan, CAM = Cambodia, FIJ = Fiji, GDP = gross domestic product, GEO = Georgia, IND = India, INO = Indonesia, JPN = Japan, KOR = Republic of Korea, KGZ = Kyrgyz Republic, LAO = Lao People’s Democratic Republic, MAL = Malaysia, MLD = Maldives, MON = Mongolia, NAU = Nauru, NEP = Nepal, PAK = Pakistan, PAL = Palau, PNG = Papua New Guinea, PHI = Philippines, PRC = People’s Republic of China, RMI = Republic of Marshall Islands, SAM = Samoa, SIN = Singapore, SOL = Solomon Islands, SPI = Social Protection Index, SRI = Sri Lanka, TAJ = Tajikistan, THA = Thailand, TIM = Timor-Leste, UZB = Uzbekistan, VIE = Viet Nam.

Source: ADB staff estimates based on SPI country reports

Asian Development Bank (2013) *The Social Protection Index Assessing Results for Asia and the Pacific*. Asian Development Bank.

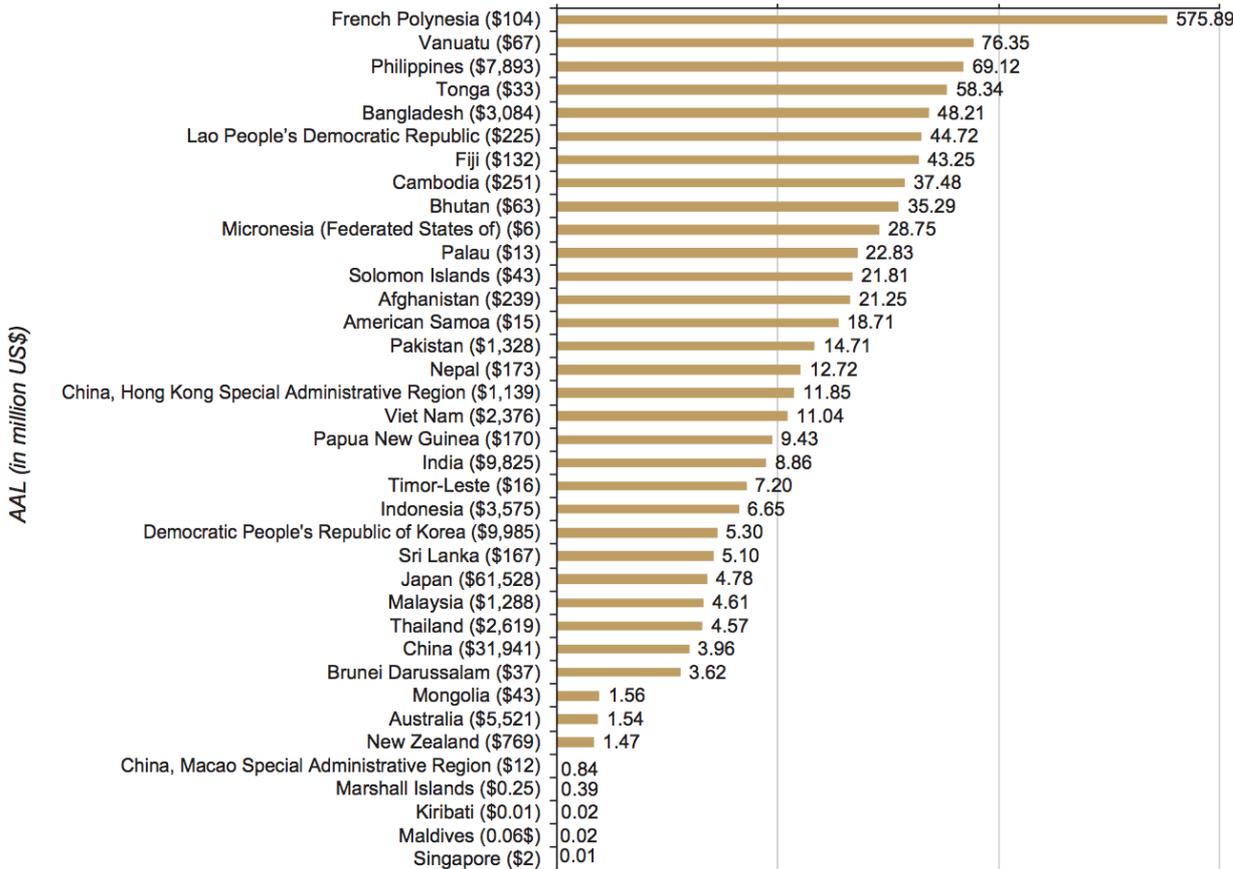
Environmental risks and vulnerabilities

The economics of climate change rests on the premise that climate change represents a major market failure where the costs of greenhouse gases emissions are not borne by those who emit them. Higher temperatures, sea level rise, and extreme weather events linked to climate change are having a major impact on the Asia-Pacific region, harming its economies, natural and physical assets, and compounding developmental challenges, including poverty, food and energy security and health. Many countries in the Asia-Pacific region are geographically vulnerable and highly exposed to the damaging impacts of climate change and in 2015, the Asia-Pacific region continued to be the world’s most disaster prone region. Asia and the Pacific incurred more than US\$45.1 billion in economic damage in 2015 and even higher indirect losses. These numbers, however, are gross underestimates as there is no systematic assessment of the cost of all disasters that struck the region. Cumulatively, disasters have affected 2.24 billion people in the region and caused damage amounting to over \$400bn since 1970, representing an ongoing erosion of development assets, such as local infrastructure, dwellings, schools, health facilities, and roads⁴⁸.

⁴⁸ UN ESCAP (2016). *The Economics of Climate Change in the Asia-Pacific region*. Bangkok.

The economic costs associated with disasters across the region are increasing. As a proportion of GDP, the damage has also been trending upward from 0.16 per cent in the 1970s to 0.34 per cent in the decade between 2005 and 2014. On an annual average basis, the costs of disasters to the region have increased from US\$1.8bn during the 1970s, to US\$73.8bn between 2004 and 2013, a forty-fold increase, representing 49 per cent of global average annual losses⁴⁹.

Figure 9: Annual Average Losses/Social Expenditure (in per cent)



UN ESCAP (2016). *The Economics of Climate Change in the Asia-Pacific region*. Bangkok.

Future losses from disasters are measured by the average annual loss (AAL) metric. This represents the amount countries should set aside each year to cope with future hazards. Estimates of the AAL show that eighteen countries in the Asia-Pacific region have a ratio of above 10 per cent relative to social spending (Figure 9), and range all the way to 76 per cent (Vanuatu). These ratios show the enormous future developmental impact that disasters represent for the region. Indeed, compared to Europe and Central Asia, small island developing States (SIDS) are expected to lose on average 20 times more of their capital stock annually in disasters. The AAL in the SIDS represent around 20 per cent of their total social expenditure, compared to less than 1 per cent in Central Asia. Without climate-driven development, climate

⁴⁹ Ibid.

change could force more than 100 million people into extreme poverty by 2030, wiping out the gains in poverty reduction achieved over the last decades⁵⁰.

Women are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change precisely because they play such a critical role in management of natural resources as a result of their responsibilities for household livelihood, such as food crop production and water and energy provision. Climate change induced catastrophes such as cyclones, changes which are less dramatic such as erratic rainfall and cumulative changes leading to deforestation and desertification can therefore be devastating for women's livelihood security as well as increase their workload in the face of tougher natural conditions⁵¹. This increase in workload caused by climate change results in women and girls having less time to spend on earning income-generating activities and education⁵². In some cases, parents are forced to take their daughters from school to assist them with work on the farm or in the household. This has long-term detrimental effects on the empowerment of these girls and women, and has a negative impact on their human capital and thereby weakens their position in the labour market.

Growth in the region is relatively stable but there are causes for concern, mainly the disparity between income groups, which translates into greater disparities in human capital and in particular in relation to access to knowledge. Knowledge more than labour will determine productivity and wealth in the future. Of concern is the fact that despite growth and increasing wealth in the region, it invests a very small percentage of GDP on social expenditure impacting human capital formation. As recent studies confirm, women continue to be concentrated in sectors that are at risk of becoming stagnant in the future with implications for earnings and vertical and horizontal segregation.

A growing middle class

Despite the economic slowdown of recent years, faster growth in previous decades has resulted in a noticeable increase in the size of the “middle class” in many countries in the region who see no reason why they should bear either the costs of climate change or a reduction in the newly achieved levels of consumption. The ever-expanding needs of mobility, technology and purchasing have become essentially non-negotiable. They are constitutive of the experience and meaning of self, identity and the social in Asia and the Pacific as in other parts of the world.

A particular feature of the expansion of the middle class and the wider economic growth process in the region is the phenomenon of rapid urbanization. Despite the positive contribution of cities to economic growth, not all urban dwellers have benefited from this transformation, as they lack access to many basic services. Rapid urbanization has also significantly raised the region's exposure to natural hazards by exacerbating existing risks and creating new ones. Dealing with

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Hannan, C. (2011). *An Overview of Women, Gender and Climate Change Issues*. Presentation at the Education International's World Conference “On the Move for Equality”, Bangkok, 20-23 January 2011.

⁵² UN Women (2014). *Why is Climate Change a Gender Issue?* UN Women, Fiji Multi-Country Office.

these challenges requires government policies that would lead to development of the necessary infrastructure and improved social support structures⁵³.

As highlighted by the figures and trends discussed in this section, the macroeconomic landscape has both a direct and indirect impact on women in Asia and the Pacific. Women are disproportionately socioeconomically marginalized and particularly vulnerable to economic as well as environmental risks. Even in countries with stable and strong economic growth, women are unlikely to have equal opportunities to share and benefit from the prosperity, a fact that is exacerbated by low social protection and insurance.

⁵³ UN ESCAP (2016). *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2016: Nurturing productivity for inclusive growth and sustainable development*. UN ESCAP 2016, Bangkok.

Section III: The pervasive trends in gender inequalities in paid and unpaid work in Asia and the Pacific

Given the macroeconomic landscape discussed in the previous sections, the persistent vertical and horizontal segregation and the pervasive cultural norms, women hold the majority of non-standard, informal, temporary, part-time and low-paid jobs. In 2015, a total of 586 million women globally were own-account or contributing family workers and women remain overrepresented as contributing family workers. Globally, the share of contributing family workers has decreased significantly among women (by 17.0 percentage points over the last 20 years) and to a lesser extent among men (by 8.1 percentage points over the same period), resulting in a decrease in the gender gap from 19.5 percentage points in 1995 to 10.6 percentage points in 2015. This trend is part of an economic restructuring shift away from agricultural work, which is largely consisted of subsistence and small-scale activities. However, many working women remain in employment statuses and in occupations that are more likely to consist of informal work arrangements. In Southern Asia, a high proportion of women work as contributing family workers (31.8 per cent, respectively) or as own-account workers (47.7 per cent, respectively)⁵⁴.

Gender thus remains one of the more durable forms of disadvantage in the economy. In fact, as far as female labour force participation rates are concerned, the story has been one of negative changes. Globally, they have decreased from 50.2 per cent in 1980 to 49.6 per cent in 2016⁵⁵. Men continue to have higher rates but a decline from 82 to 76.1 per cent during this period led to a reduction in the gender gap in labour force participation rates. The persistence of constraints on women's mobility in the public domain probably explains why there were just 30 women per 100 men in the labour force in South Asia, where these restrictions are strong, compared to 70-79 in East Asia where they are weaker⁵⁶.

Economic structural shifts

The economic structural shift has caused women to move out of agriculture and into services and manufacturing, although at a different pace in different sub-regions and generally more slowly than men. However, the movement out of agriculture has not necessarily signified a movement into the kind of productive employment and decent work highlighted by SDG 8. First, many more women than men are unemployed. Secondly, the rise in female labour force participation has led to only a modest decline in the horizontal segregation by gender of the occupational structure viz. the distribution of men and women across occupations and very little change in vertical segregation. Women continue to be concentrated to a greater extent than men in low paid occupations, worse prospects for advancement and more precarious working conditions. Thirdly, the rise in female labour force participation has been occurring at a time

⁵⁴ ILO (2016). *Women at Work: Trends*. Geneva: ILO Office.

⁵⁵ ILO (2016). *World Employment and Social Outlook: Trends 2016*. Geneva: ILO.

⁵⁶ Kabeer, N. (2012). *Women's economic empowerment and inclusive growth: Labour markets and enterprise development*. SIG Working Paper 2012/1.

when employment is generally becoming more precarious and insecure. While working women have always been disproportionately represented in informal employment, these trends mean that there is far less likelihood that their increased labour force participation will lead to an increase in their share of formal employment. Evidence from a wide range of developing countries in Asia and the Pacific show widespread and increasing entry of women into work on a temporary, casual, seasonal or part time basis, often in home-based activities or subcontracted by intermediaries as part of global value chains. In addition, a large proportion of working women are working as unpaid labour in family farms and enterprises with no access to an income of their own. The informal economy is highly heterogeneous but also highly stratified. There is a close association between the quality of jobs and gender – with men dominating the upper echelons of the hierarchy and women over-represented in the lower echelons – along with other markers of social inequality such as caste, ethnicity, race, legal status and so on⁵⁷. Moreover, as discussed further in Section III, when industries become more attractive and formal they are increasingly likely to become “defeminized”, referring to a decline in the female share of employment⁵⁸.

The global gender pay gap is estimated to be 22.9 per cent which means that on average women earn 77.1 per cent of what men earn⁵⁹. In Asia and the Pacific, women earn one-half to two-thirds of what men earn for the same work in some countries in Asia⁶⁰. The gender pay gap however varies between countries. The gap is particularly wide in Nepal and Pakistan, where women earn 40.5 per cent and 38.5 per cent less than men⁶¹. Smaller gender pay gaps are found in Viet Nam (-9.4 per cent), Malaysia (-4.5 per cent) and Thailand (-1.4 per cent). Data also suggests that women earn marginally more than men in Timor-Leste (+1.7 per cent) and the Philippines (+6.1 per cent), as shown in Figure 10. However, such estimation generally fails to capture wage inequalities in the informal economy where most working women are located and where earning gaps appear to be larger⁶². For example, in Vietnam, men earned nearly 50 per cent more than women in informal employment with similar in working hours, education and seniority⁶³.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Tejani, S., and Milberg, W. (2010). Global defeminization? Industrial upgrading, occupational segmentation and manufacturing employment in middle-income countries. *Feminist Economics*, 22(2).

⁵⁹ Gammage, S. and Stevanovich, N. (2016). *Gender, Migration and Care Deficits: What Role is There for the SDGs?* UN Women. Expert Group Meeting: Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work. Geneva, Switzerland. 26-28 September 2016.

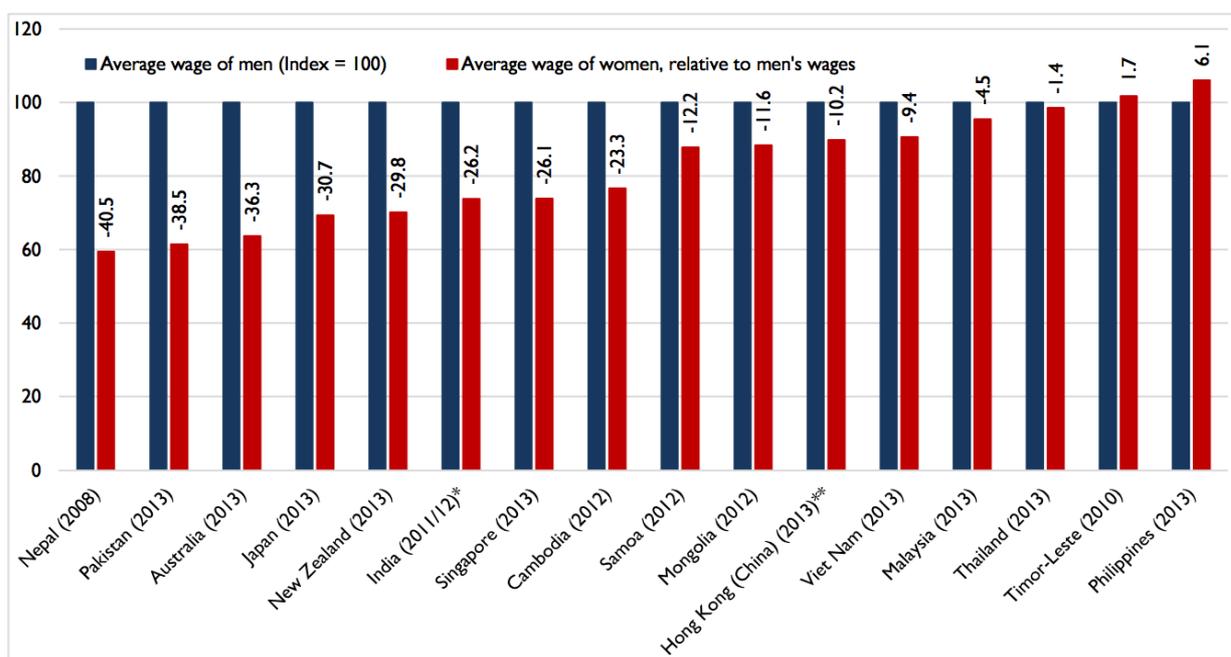
⁶⁰ Asian Development Bank (2015). *Women in the Workforce: An Unmet Potential in Asia and Pacific*. Asian Development Bank.

⁶¹ ILO (2014). *Global Wage Report 2014/15: Asia and the Pacific Supplement. Wages in Asia and the Pacific: Dynamic but Uneven Progress*. ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific: Regional Economic and Social Analysis Unit.

⁶² Kabeer, N. (2012). *Women’s economic empowerment and inclusive growth: Labour markets and enterprise development*. SIG Working Paper 2012/1.

⁶³ Cling, J., M. Razafindrakoto and F. Roubaud (2011) The informal economy in Vietnam Hanoi: ILO

Figure 10: Gender wage gaps in Asia and the Pacific, 2013 or latest available year (in per cent)



* Based on average daily wage or salary earnings received by regular wage and salaried employees (activity status codes: 31, 71, 72) of age 15 to 59 years, multiplied by 313/12.

** Based on an establishment survey with broad coverage; refers to full-time employees.

Note: The figures give the unadjusted gender wage gap, which is defined as women's shortfall in wages, expressed as per cent of men's average wage.

Source: ILO: Global Wage Database 2014/15, based on national statistics.

Global Wage Report 2014/15: Asia and the Pacific Supplement. Wages in Asia and the Pacific: Dynamic but Uneven Progress. ILO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific: Regional Economic and Social Analysis Unit.

Trends and drivers of women's labour force participation

The participation of women in the labour force varies considerably across developing countries and emerging economies in AP, far more than in the case of men. The female labour force participation (FLFP) rate varies considerably across the globe. In other developing regions, there has been an increase in FLFP, which is in contrast to what is observed across Asia⁶⁴. South Asia has one of the lowest FLFP rates with 35 per cent and thereby significantly lags behind East Asia and Pacific (64 per cent) where FLFP has been increasing⁶⁵. The South Asia rate is pushed by India, where the FLFP rate declined from 34.1 per cent in 1999-00 to 27.2 per cent in 2011-12⁶⁶.

⁶⁴ Dasgupta, S. and Verick, S. S. (2016). Introduction. In *Transformation of Women at Work in Asia: An Unfinished Development Agenda*, Dasgupta, S. and Verick, S. S. (Ed.) 1-23. Geneva: ILO Publishing/SAGE Publications India Private Limited, 2016.

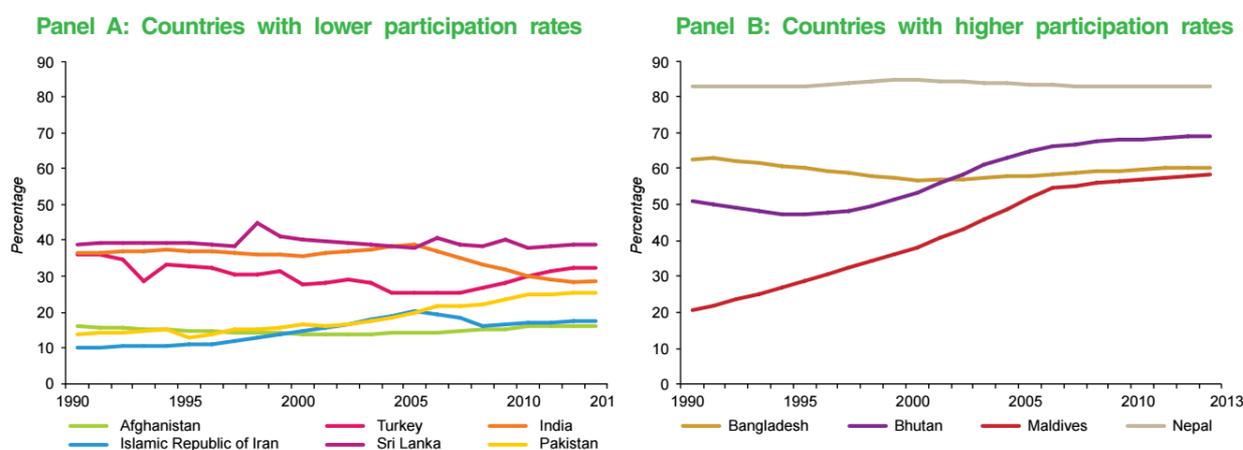
⁶⁵ Asian Development Bank (2015). *Women in the Workforce: An Unmet Potential in Asia and Pacific*. Asian Development Bank.

⁶⁶ Verick, S. (2014) *Women's Labour Force Participation in India: Why is it so Low?* International Labour Organization.

Diversity of female labour force participation

Considerable diversity in the female participation rates can be observed in South Asia (Figure 12) and historical gender roles, spaces and stereotypes continue to affect outcomes. The longer term trends suggest that women have increased their participation in Bangladesh, which is due to the growth of the ready-made garment sector and an increase in rural female employment, mainly on the account of the spread of micro-credit. The rate has also increased in Pakistan, albeit from a very low starting point, and is particularly low in the urban areas, whereas the participation has remained relatively stable in Sri Lanka, though the latter one has witnessed robust economic growth and strong improvements in social indicators in recent years. Most notable is the falling engagement of women in the Indian labour force, which occurred despite the strong economic growth, declining fertility rates and rising wages and incomes^{67,68}. Some possible causes for the decreasing FLFP in India are: Increasing educational attendance that merely shifted the figures as the young adults will join the labour market after their education, increased household incomes that reduce the need for female labour, and insufficient job opportunities for women. Another possible explanation is that as income increases, women conform to the expectations of an emerging middle class and accept many of the norms like complying with the male breadwinner model.

Figure 11: Female labour force participation diverse in South and South-West Asia



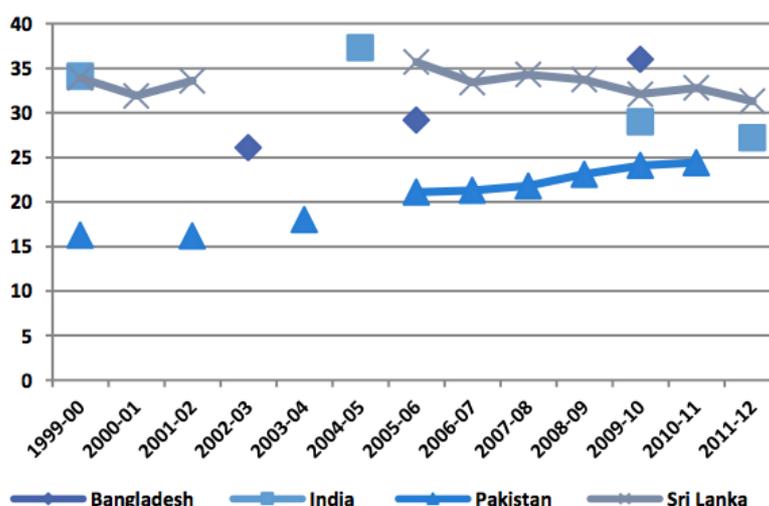
Sources: ESCAP, based on the World Development Indicators database of the World Bank.

Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2016: Nurturing productivity for inclusive growth and sustainable development. UN ESCAP 2016, Bangkok.

⁶⁷ Kabeer, N. (2012). *Women's economic empowerment and inclusive growth: Labour markets and enterprise development.* SIG Working Paper 2012/1.

⁶⁸ Kapsos, S., Silberman, A. and Bourmpoula, E. (2016). Decline of Women's Labour Force Participation in India. In *Transformation of Women at Work in Asia: An Unfinished Development Agenda*, Dasgupta, S. and Verick, S. S. (Ed.) 1-23. Geneva: ILO Publishing/SAGE Publications India Private Limited, 2016.

Figure 12: Trends in female labour force participation rates in South Asia (per cent) (various years)



Source: Based on data from National Statistical Offices Notes: Sri Lanka - 10+, excluding North and Eastern provinces

Verick, S. (2014) *Women's Labour Force Participation in India: Why is it so Low?* International Labour Organization.

Poverty is a major factor driving women's labour force participation rates in South Asia. While there are some regional variations in the economic activity rates of women from more affluent households, women from poorer households in most regions are either economically active or seeking to become so. In cultures like South Asia, where there are strict norms of female seclusion, there is in fact a strong association between household poverty and women's labour force participation. Indeed, women in India from the lower caste and tribal groups have "always" worked. Studies show that women's labour force participation rises in response to economic distress. For instance, a research shows a strong counter-cyclical pattern in Asia with less educated women dominating the "added worker" effect, supporting the "distress sale" interpretation of their entry into paid work, and that this effect is weaker among women from wealthier households or with husbands who had at least secondary education⁶⁹. Weaker cyclicity is also displayed by more educated women, suggesting steadier labour market attachment. Moreover, while quantitative evidence has been able to pick up the 'added worker' effect in explaining women's entry into the labour market, qualitative research suggests that part of the rise in female labour force participation may be a response to long-term processes of impoverishment rather than confined to economic shocks⁷⁰.

Studies thus suggest that there is a sizeable segment of economically active women at any one time who are working to meet the daily survival needs of their families, to offset the impact of

⁶⁹ Bhalotra, S. and Umana-Aponte, M. (2010). *The dynamics of women's labour supply in developing countries*. IZA Discussion Paper No. 4879. Bonn: Institute for the Study of Labor.

⁷⁰ Kabeer, N. (2012). *Women's economic empowerment and inclusive growth: Labour markets and enterprise development*. SIG Working Paper 2012/1.

idiosyncratic or generalized shocks or to cope with intensified processes of impoverishment. These women are typically married with children and have little education, but are above all united from poorer households. The supply of labour by these women is not only the least likely to reflect an active choice on their part, but also the least likely to be into forms of work that could be considered empowering⁷¹.

The increase in women's labour force participation across most of the Asian and the Pacific region has been in vulnerable informal employment to a large extent. This is connected to the high inequality and poverty, together with low levels of income security that are associated with a prevalence of informal employment and the associated lack of protection. The informal economy is characterized by a shortage of productive development, large decent work deficit, and a lack of both labour and social protection for the majority of workers, resulting in low incomes and a high degree of income insecurity. The existing labour relations institutions face difficulties in addressing these challenges and finding new ways of aggregating workers' interests⁷².

Informality of work

Informality has broader implications for the social contract in a society, as it constitutes a symptom of a significant malfunctioning in the relationship between the state and its citizens. An effective social contract requires a fair balance between rights and obligations, an equitable and effective application of the law and appropriate enforcement mechanisms, as well as effective accountability mechanisms. If citizens and economic actors cannot trust the state to provide them with needed services and protection, laws are not enforced in an equitable and effective way, legal and institutional frameworks are perceived as dysfunctional and ineffective, the tax system is not recognized as a fair and effective mechanism to finance collective goods, then the compliance with legal frameworks will remain low.

Lack of social security systems is a fundamental problem for informal workers, not least for migrant informal workers for whom the lack of transnational social security systems increases the possibility and scope of their exploitation⁷³. A main challenge of informal work is how to create human capital that can cope with the new skills while at the same time providing a social security floor. While 52.1 per cent of women and 51.2 per cent of men in the labour market are wage and salaried workers, this constitutes no guarantee of higher job quality. In fact, globally, nearly 40 per cent of women in wage employment do not contribute to social protection. Those proportions reach 74.2 per cent in Southern Asia, where informal employment is the dominant form of employment. Additionally, in Southern Asia, informal employment represents over 80 per cent of non-agricultural employment (Figure 13)⁷⁴.

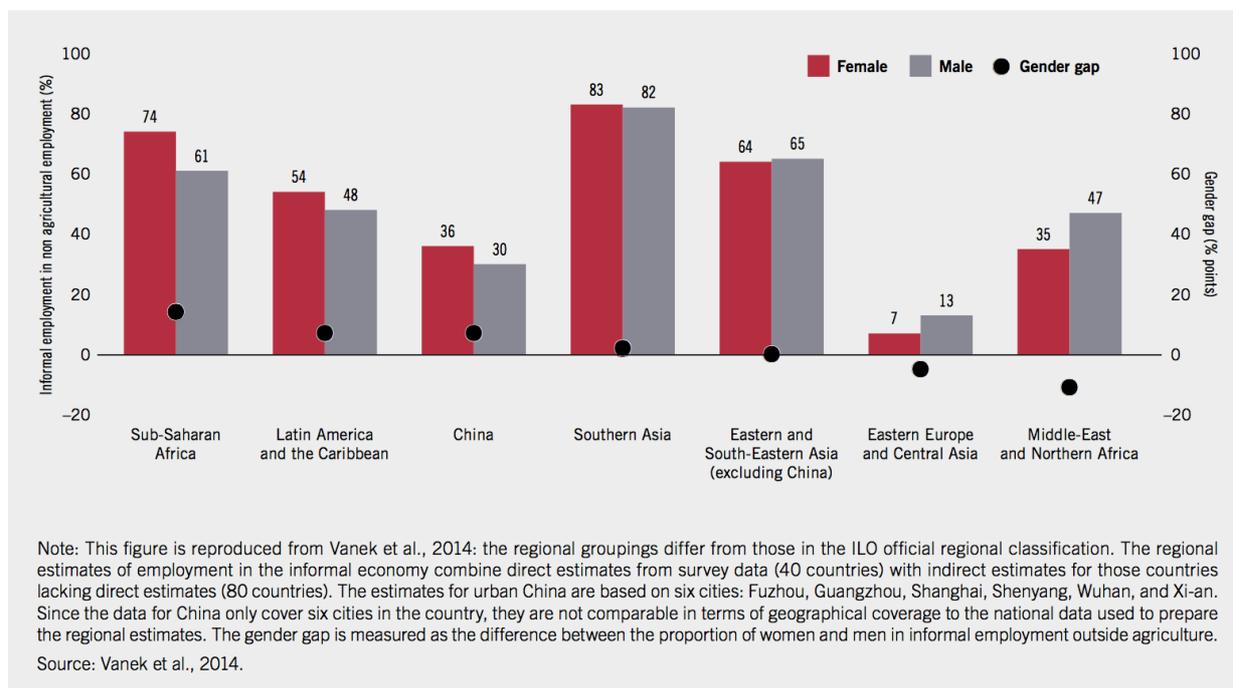
⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² ILO (2016) *Social Contract and the Future of Work: Inequality, Income Security, Labour Relations and Social Dialogue*. 4th issue, note series: The Future of Work Centenary Initiative

⁷³ Gammage, S. and Stevanovich, N. (2016). *Gender, Migration and Care Deficits: What Role is There for the SDGs?* UN Women. Expert Group Meeting: Women's Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work. Geneva, Switzerland. 26-28 September 2016.

⁷⁴ ILO (2016). *Women at Work: Trends*. Geneva: ILO Office.

Figure 13: Informal employment as a percentage of non-agricultural employment by gender



ILO (2016). *Women at Work: Trends*. Geneva: ILO Office.

Careful consideration of gender issues in the design and implementation of social protection systems, and social protection floors in particular, is an essential contribution to the work of promoting gender equality and the lack of social protection and measures impedes women's access to more, formal and decent jobs. Inadequate access to water supply, sanitation, electricity, roads, safe transport and health-care services is a crucial factor behind the time spent by women on unpaid work and their disadvantaged position in the labour force. The undervaluation of care work, both paid and unpaid, perpetuates poor working conditions for women, who form the vast majority of the employed care workforce, an increasingly large number of whom are migrant workers. Social protection schemes should be geared to guarantee equality of treatment between men and women, to take into account gender roles and to serve as a mechanism for the achievement of gender equality. They should serve as a gender-transformative tool by addressing women's specific life contingencies, such as maternity, and by recognizing, reducing and redistributing unpaid care and household work.

When is women's work empowering?

While household distress may have forced many women into paid work, there are also factors at play that prevent other women from working or restrict the kinds of work they do. Women's socially ascribed responsibilities for various forms of unpaid work within the home clearly play a role in explaining their lower rates of labour force participation relative to men. They also explain their greater concentration in forms of work that are compatible with discharging these

responsibilities but carry poorer remuneration: part-time, casual, irregular, seasonal and often home-based⁷⁵.

While some studies view women opting for informal work because it accommodates their household chores as evidence of choice⁷⁶, other factors need to be considered. Legal restrictions that requires women to seek their husbands' permission to start an enterprise or take up paid work as well as customs giving men the authority to determine how women use their time are other important factors to take into account. A study of female labour supply decision-making among Bangladeshi households highlights this concern, reporting both on women who were forbidden to take up paid work outside the home by their husbands and in-laws as well as the prolonged negotiations through which other women obtained permission to do such work from their husbands and parents. Constraints apply in explicit as well as implicit ways, as part of the socially ascribed obligations associated with household gender relations. Furthermore, gender-based violence in all forms, both at home and in the workplace, can also affect women's work. More evidence and data is however needed from developing countries to provide a full picture on this.

Evidence thus suggests that while there may be a gendered pattern to labour market behaviour, we cannot make generalizations about why women work and the factors determining the kind of work they do. Women's decisions are likely to reflect different degrees of choice and constraint, depending not only on individual and household characteristics, such as age, education, wealth, husband's education and so on but also according to the acceptability of work within the local culture as well as the amount and kinds of work available. What seems to be a reasonable generalization to draw from our discussion is that empowerment potential of work is likely to be greater, the more the decision to work and category of work is the result of active choice on the part of women.

Moreover, an indicator of the persistence of gender disadvantage is evidence that women's increasing entry into paid work has not been accompanied by a commensurate change in the gender division of unpaid labour in the domestic economy. By and large, women remain responsible for a great deal of the unpaid work that ensure the survival and care of their families over time and research show that women tend to retain responsibility for these activities even if they take up paid employment. As a result, working women tend to work longer hours each day than working men, giving rise to the phenomenon of time poverty. Studies furthermore show that income poverty and time poverty reinforce each other and that women are typically most severely affected. A Korean study highlights this, finding that the highest incidence of time poverty occurs among women who are income poor, whereas income poor men have the lowest time poverty rate⁷⁷.

⁷⁵ Kabeer, N. (2012). *Women's economic empowerment and inclusive growth: Labour markets and enterprise development*. SIG Working Paper 2012/1.

⁷⁶ Maloney, W. (2004). Informality revisited. In *World Development*, Vol. 32 (7): 1159-1178.

⁷⁷ Floro, M. S., and King, E. M. (2016). The Present and Future of Time-Use Analysis in Developing Countries. *Asia-Pacific Population Journal*, 31(1), 5-42.

Evidence of the persistence of gender inequalities in relation to labour market outcomes raises the question of whether, given the poor quality jobs that the majority of working women have access to, we can assume that paid work for women is always empowering. Research suggests that generally, women in paid work report more positive impacts in relation to a range of empowerment indicators than economically inactive women. Women's paid work thus appear to constitute an economic pathway to changes in their lives that went beyond the economic domain. Formal/semi-formal employment appear to be the most consistently empowering overall, while economic activity within the confines of family relations hold the weakest transformative potential for women's lives. The finding that formal/semi-formal paid work offers the most promising pathway to women's empowerment presents a conundrum for the empowerment agenda as such work is shrinking in most parts of the world. It is therefore unlikely that the vast majority of women currently in the informal economy can hope to enjoy formal conditions of work in the future. The challenge therefore is to extend some of the positive aspects of formal work – recognition, skills upscaling, regularity of wages, social protection, voice and organization – to work carried out in the informal economy⁷⁸.

The future of work and non-standard forms of employment

It is likely that the future of work will be increasingly in the context of informality as physical frontiers continue to disappear and the employee-employer relationship blurs. The social contract that employment provides and especially its use as a means to determine rights, entitlements and protections to workers, will vary enormously. Many workers in an employment relationship do not enjoy full protection, and many workers are unable to secure work within an employment relationship⁷⁹. In its classical form the employment relationship co-evolved with the economic organization of work into the Standard Employment Relationship (SER). This concept refers to work performed in the framework of full-time, formal and open-ended arrangements in a subordinate employment relationship. The employment relationship is the key regulatory device for allocating rights and obligations between an employee and an employer, but the SER is under growing strain⁸⁰.

First, workers are increasingly engaged in Non-Standard Forms of Employment (NSFE), which affects both labour demand and supply and can pose challenges for the operation of regulatory frameworks. While there is no official definition of NSFE, it includes any work done outside a standard employment relationship, such as temporary employment, temporary agency work and other work involving multiple parties, ambiguous employment relationships and part-time employment. NSFE's are often associated with significant decent-work gaps such as lower earnings, reduced social security coverage and diminished working conditions⁸¹.

⁷⁸ Kabeer, N. (2012). *Women's economic empowerment and inclusive growth: Labour markets and enterprise development*. SIG Working Paper 2012/1.

⁷⁹ ILO (2016). *A Challenging Future for the Employment Relationship: Time for Affirmation or Alternatives?* 3rd issue, note series: The Future of Work Centenary Initiative

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

Second, not all work for pay or profit happens in an employment relationship. Some workers are self-employed, and their working conditions are largely regulated by civil contracts with those to whom they supply their labour. Some workers may be neither employees nor self-employed, such as unpaid trainees, interns or volunteers. Some workers are deprived of the benefits of an employment relationship by the very fact of being involved in informal employment. They may work in the informal economy, or their employment in the formal economy may be undeclared or under declared. For decades, countries have been tackling both forms of informality. But progress has been rather slow, and the standard form of employment in many developing countries remains an elusive goal. Not enjoying full protection and not being able to secure work within an employment relationship are both types of exclusions that will continue in the future in the absence of effective policy action. In addition, the standard employment relationship is being eroded in developed countries, with more workers finding themselves outside the employment relationship itself⁸².

The opportunities in ASEAN economies

However, as discussed above, the relationship between human beings, their gender adscriptions, work as it is currently known and technology will change dramatically. Current macroeconomic patterns do not predict the formalization of work but an increased divide between those in high end jobs and those in new and informal work relationships. While little work has been done for the whole region on what will be the trends for women's employment, empirical evidence suggests that growth has not led to more and better jobs or to increased income opportunities for the vast majority of the poor, particularly women and youth. Findings from a study completed by UN Women on the Projected Gender Impact of the ASEAN Economic Community⁸³ showed that the free movement of goods, services, investment, capital and skilled labour across the ten ASEAN member states will not benefit women as much as it will benefit men.

Informal enterprises and informal employment continue to define ASEAN economies. Clearly, economic growth and integration alone do not guarantee that the poor and the marginalized will participate in and benefit from growth. The AEC Priority Integration Sectors (PISs) accounted for nearly 70 per cent of the region's exports in 2003. However, since 2007 the share of PISs has been gradually declining. The only PISs where exports grew at a high rate of 10–15 per cent per annum (higher than electronics) are agro-based, rubber and automotive products. From 2007 to 2013, exports of wood-based, fisheries and electronic products slowed down significantly⁸⁴.

Although the impact of the formation of AEC on women in the ASEAN is going to be significant in terms of the volume of jobs that are created, the structure of women's labour force participation in ASEAN countries inhibits their ability to take advantage of the opportunities

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (2016). *Projected Gender Impact of the ASEAN Economic Community*. The ASEAN Secretariat, Jakarta.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

created by the AEC or to prepare to cope with demand-side shocks in the job market. An analysis of the International Labour Organization (ILO) data show that the impact of the AEC on the gender wage gap remains at approximately 20 per cent in 2025. While wages are predicted to increase for both skilled and unskilled men and women workers, the average wage increase is higher for skilled male workers and lower for unskilled female workers (a large number of whom are migrant and vulnerable workers). Overall, as with wages, it is predicted that job gains for male workers tend to be higher than for female workers for both semi-skilled and unskilled categories. It is predicted that the male share of employment is expected to expand by 13 per cent in the Philippines, 11 per cent in Cambodia and 7 per cent in Thailand. Female share of employment is expected to expand in Viet Nam and Cambodia (13 per cent), and Indonesia (11 per cent)⁸⁵.

The share of high-skilled sectors (such as automotive and electronics, which comprised 4.8 per cent and 15.6 per cent respectively of the share of total exports) in the ASEAN economies is increasing. Whereas sectors where women dominate the workforce, such as agriculture and garments, are relatively stagnant. Value-added agro products show an upward swing, as do other commercial agriculture-based products such as rubber and wood. Non-PISs, such as financial services and oil and energy, are also a large share of ASEAN exports. Both these sectors are currently dominated by male employees. Agro products, garments and tourism (all three) comprise the largest share of exports from many ASEAN countries, and it is expected that with the AEC's focus on expanding trade in the PIS, the share of these sectors will expand. In the oil and energy and financial services sectors, women's participation is generally in more skilled types of jobs but in a smaller proportion. These sectors are considered highly skilled and, given the skill differences between men and women, the jobs in these sectors tend to be male-dominated. Another exacerbating factor for the obstacles women face in accessing employment in such sectors is male bias in hiring for higher status and more technologically advanced jobs⁸⁶, which will be discussed further in Section IV.

Growth in Asia presents economic opportunities for both men and women through a boost in trade and formal paid employment opportunities. However, these jobs will continue being vertically and horizontally segregated with low pay, productivity and skill development. Countries where there are large numbers of skilled workers – men and women – will benefit significantly from the increased employment opportunities in skilled professional categories, especially exportable services.

SMEs and women entrepreneurs

An area that promises significant opportunities for women is the active promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). SMEs play a vital role in the Asia-Pacific economy, acting as vehicles to generate inclusive growth at the national and regional levels. In some ASEAN

⁸⁵ International Labour Organization and Asian Development Bank (2014). *ASEAN Community 2015: Managing integration for better jobs and shared prosperity*. Bangkok, Thailand: ILO and ADB.

⁸⁶ Tejani, S., and Milberg, W. (2010). Global defeminization? Industrial upgrading, occupational segmentation and manufacturing employment in middle-income countries. *Feminist Economics*, 22(2), 24-25.

countries, women dominate the SME sector. For example, in Cambodia, nearly 63 per cent of new businesses are women-owned. In the case of Malaysia, women-owned SMEs accounted for 20 per cent of total SMEs, relatively lower than the East Asian average of 38 per cent women-owned SMEs, but the growth rate of women-owned SMEs in Malaysia is the highest in the region at nearly 10 per cent. While SME development provides potentially important opportunities for increasing women's SME participation in the region, they are reported to have difficulties in gaining access to finance, technology and markets. In particular women-led enterprises face additional constraints. Low productivity and competitiveness due to scarce levels of technological and management innovation are important factors contributing to the vulnerability of women-led SMEs. States and large private sector companies, through their purchasing power, can become important drivers of innovation and competitiveness of SMEs in developing countries. Technology can play an important role in enterprise development. The possibilities of billions of people connected by mobile devices, with unprecedented processing power, storage capacity, and access to knowledge, are unlimited. And these possibilities will be multiplied by emerging technology breakthroughs in fields such as artificial intelligence, robotics, the Internet of Things, autonomous vehicles, 3-D printing, nanotechnology, biotechnology, materials science, energy storage, and quantum computing.

This section has examined the current situations of how and why women work in paid, unpaid, informal and non-standard work. However, looking forward is the most important thing to do when striving towards women's empowerment. The changing forms of work due to the economic structural shift, rising opportunities in SMEs and women entrepreneurship, and the advancement of technology all pose new opportunities for women's work and open up for challenging traditional patterns of labour distribution. The following section will discuss ways in which technological advancement can provide both opportunities and challenges with new implications for women's economic empowerment.

Section IV: The changing world of work - Technology and its implications for women's productive and care work

From previous sections, the conclusion that growth will continue to be the ultimate development goal in Asia and the Pacific follows. As such the macroeconomic model will not change radically. Consumption and innovation are two important trends that will affect inclusiveness and sustainability. As wealth increases and a middle class becomes buoyant, investment in innovation will satisfy new consumption trends and will rely heavily in technology to improve productivity and meet the demand. This will have crucial implications for work particularly for women's work, as the majority of women are located in the lower end of the value chain, where technology will substitute labour, for example, in garment industry and commercial agriculture. It will also affect women's work due to the gender gap in innovation is stark and will continue to grow as these occupations become "defeminized". The pace of technological change will mean that the ways of work will be transformed quickly. Policies should anticipate these shifts and prepare women to access decent work, both in the occupations where they are currently concentrated and most importantly in those occupations that will offer the best wages and productivity gains.

In the near future, disruptive changes to business models will have a profound impact on the employment landscape. Many of the major drivers of transformation, which are currently affecting global industries, are expected to have a significant change on jobs, ranging from job creation to job displacement, and from heightening labour productivity to widening skills gaps. In many industries and countries, the most "in-demand" occupations or specialties did not exist 10 years ago, and the pace of change is set to accelerate. By one popular estimate, 65 percent of children entering primary school today will ultimately end up working in completely new job types that don't yet exist⁸⁷. In such a rapidly evolving employment landscape, the ability to anticipate and prepare for future skill requirements, job content, and the aggregate effect on employment, are increasingly critical in order to seize the opportunities presented by these trends — and to mitigate undesirable outcomes.

Today, we are at the beginning of the fourth industrial revolution. The first industrial revolution used water and steam power to mechanize production, the second used electric power to create mass production, the third used electronics and information technology to automate production, and the fourth is characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres. Developments in previously disjointed fields such as artificial intelligence and machine learning, robotics, nanotechnology, 3D printing and genetics and biotechnology are all building on and amplifying one another. Concurrent to this technological revolution are a set of broader socio-economic, geopolitical and demographic developments, with nearly equivalent impact to the technological factors. Studies find that the

⁸⁷ World Economic Forum (2016). *The Future of Jobs: Employment, Skills and Workforce Strategy for the Fourth Industrial Revolution*. World Economic Forum, Geneva, Switzerland.

impact for nearly all these drivers will occur within the next 5 years, highlighting the urgency for adaptive action⁸⁸.

Table 3: Definitions of technologies

Types of Technology	Definitions
Internet and Communication Technologies (ICT)	An umbrella term for communication devices or applications, including cellular phones, radio, television and computers, which allows users to store, access, transmit and manipulate information.
Nanotechnology	A branch of technology that is concerned with tolerances and dimensions of less than 100 nanometres, in particular the manipulation of individual atoms and molecules.
The Internet of things	The interconnection via the internet of computing devices that are embedded in everyday objects, ranging greatly from heart monitoring implants to robotic vacuums, enabling them to send and receive data and thus be remotely controlled.
Artificial Intelligence	The development and theory of computer systems that are able to carry out tasks that normally requires human intelligence. Examples of such are speech recognition, visual perception and decision-making.
Machine Learning	A sort of artificial intelligence that provides computers with the ability to learn without having been explicitly programmed. A key field for machine learning is the development of computer programs that are able to change and adapt when exposed to new data.
Robotics	The branch of technology that is concerned with the construction, design, application and operation of robots. Robotics are often used for time efficiency and for more accurate consistency in manufacturing.
3D Printing	The process of manufacturing a solid object from a three-dimensional digital model by laying down thin layers in succession. It is used to create a great range of things, from a motorcycle part to testing prototypes. Medical 3D printing is a notable emerging field of 3D printing, exploring how the technique can be used to support or replace existing biological structures.
Biotechnology	The use of biological organisms, systems or processes to manufacture products intended to improve quality of life. Biotechnology has in recent years expanded in scope, applicability and sophistication to include medical processes such as using stem cells to regenerate human tissues, industrial processes such as the development

⁸⁸ Ibid.

	of new fuels, and agricultural processes such as the development of pest-resistant grains.
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Source: TechTarget (2017). Available at: <http://whatis.techtarget.com/> [17/01/2017]

With these technological innovations, the global workforce is expected to experience significant churn between job families and functions. 2016 WEF report reveals that current movement could lead to a net employment impact of more than 5.1 million job loss to disruptive labour market changes over the period 2015–2020, with a total loss of 7.1 million jobs, two thirds of which are concentrated in routine white collar office functions, and a total gain of 2 million jobs in computer, mathematical, architectural and engineering related fields. Manufacturing and production roles are also expected to see a further bottoming out but are also anticipated to have relatively good potential for upskilling, redeployment and productivity enhancement through technology rather than pure substitution⁸⁹.

While there is a broad consensus on the productivity potential of technological change, recent years have witnessed growing concerns about the “labour replacing potential” of the current kind of technological change. Some believe that the current wave has already reached a tipping point so that a jobless digitalization of the economy could be a reality in the near future. Others disagree, some are more optimistic, noting the sequential process of job creation in which is often stronger than job destruction. Still, others admit that technological innovation puts jobs at risk, but that this is not inevitable⁹⁰.

The impact of technological change on the world of work within countries and across the globe will depend on how productivity gains are distributed between economic and social groups. It is particularly important as today’s technological innovation is taking place when overall income inequality has already reached a historic high⁹¹. It is necessary to facilitate the diffusion of new technologies and create a market environment where the most productive firms are allowed to thrive, thereby facilitating the more widespread penetration of available technologies in order to sustain productivity growth⁹².

Job transformation and polarization: An issue of inequality

Technological changes will transform the nature and quality of existing and new jobs. The key concern of how to avoid the destruction of good jobs and the creation of bad jobs is well captured by Gordon:

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ ILO (2016). *Technological changes and work in the future: Making technology work for all*. 1st issue, note series: The Future of Work Centenary Initiative.

⁹¹ Piketty, T. (2014). *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*. Boston, Mass, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

⁹² OECD (2015). *The Future of Productivity*. OECD Publishing, Paris.

“The problem created by the computer age is not mass unemployment but the gradual disappearance of good, steady, middle-level jobs that have been lost not just to robots and algorithms but to globalization and outsourcing to other countries, together with the concentration of job growth in routine manual jobs that offer relatively low wages.”⁹³

In developing countries, the major concern is to generate patterns of diversification that generate more and better jobs. Most importantly, many of the routine manual jobs, which Gordon refers to, are the occupations where women concentrate, including care-work. Another important issue is whether the demand for higher-skilled occupations comes at the cost of middle-skilled jobs, i.e., whether it will create the polarization of jobs or a “hollowing out”. Studies have shown that since the 1980s, the share of middle-skilled routine jobs in the US decreased relative to low- and higher-skilled jobs⁹⁴. However, recent studies estimate the impact of robotization and globalization on jobs during the 1990s and 2000s and confirm the results for the US but find limited evidence of widespread job polarization elsewhere. Job polarization can also be observed at a global level, especially when technological progress occurs unevenly with low-income countries lagging behind. Evidence shows that patterns of change in occupational composition differ widely across countries. While some countries increase the share of high-skill intensive and middle-skill intensive jobs, others demonstrate job polarization as defined above, and some countries simply increase the share of medium-skilled jobs. Nonetheless, this has been accompanied by eroding some of the characteristics of formal work such as a clear relationship with an employer, as discussed in Section III in regard to the growing prevalence of NSFEs⁹⁵.

First, workers are increasingly engaged in Non-Standard Forms of Employment (NSFE), which affects both labour demand and supply and can pose challenges for the operation of regulatory frameworks. While there is no official definition of NSFE, it includes any work done outside a standard employment relationship, such as temporary employment, temporary agency work and other work involving multiple parties, ambiguous employment relationships and part-time employment. NSFEs are often associated with significant decent-work gaps such as lower earnings, reduced social security coverage and diminished working conditions.

Like the revolutions that preceded it, the fourth industrial revolution has the potential to raise global income levels and improve the quality of life for populations around the world. At the same time, the revolution could yield greater inequality, particularly in its potential to disrupt labour markets. As automation substitutes for labour across the entire economy, the net displacement of workers by machines might exacerbate the gap between returns to capital and

⁹³ Gordon, R. J. (2016). *The rise and fall of American growth: The U.S. standard of living since the Civil War*. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, p. 604.

⁹⁴ ILO (2016) *Technological changes and work in the future: Making technology work for all*. 1st issue, note series: The Future of Work Centenary Initiative

⁹⁵ ILO (2016). *A Challenging Future for the Employment Relationship: Time for Affirmation or Alternatives?* 3rd issue, note series: The Future of Work Centenary Initiative

returns to labour. On the other hand, it is also possible that the displacement of workers by technology will, in aggregate, result in a net increase in safe and rewarding jobs⁹⁶.

In addition to being a key economic concern, inequality represents the greatest societal concern associated with the fourth industrial revolution. The largest beneficiaries of innovation tend to be the providers of intellectual and physical capital, which explains the rising gap in wealth between those who are dependent on capital versus labour. Technology is therefore one of the main reasons why incomes have stagnated, or even decreased, for a majority of the population in high-income countries: the demand for highly skilled workers has increased while the demand for workers with less education and lower skills has decreased. The result is a job market with a strong demand at the high and low ends, but a hollowing out of the middle.

Productivity gains from technological innovation are substantial and may continue to be so. In the era of wider IT applicability and globalization, economies of scale (and productivity gains) are likely to be even larger. However, because these gains have gone primarily to the owners of such innovation, recent technological changes have contributed to widening inequality. Due to the unequal distribution of high productivity gains arising from innovations among capital owners, skilled and unskilled workers and consumers, the job polarization noted above has led to a rise in inequality in many countries. Moreover, the expected increase in the skills of managers, and in particular the important soft skills that can only be acquired through experience, may contribute to rising inter-generational inequality. Thus, with continued technological advancement, inequality may increase further⁹⁷.

New opportunities: IT in business process outsourcing

Technological advancements are producing alternative and flexible forms of work for women. An example of this is the IT-Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry, which offers unique opportunities for increasing women's labour force participation and shifting women's participation into higher productivity sectors of the economy. Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) involves the contracting of operations and responsibilities of specific business processes to a third-party service provider. Technology has enabled companies to outsource services or back-office business functions, ranging from very simple jobs, such as website testing, to the more complex, such as software development, translation services, data entry, and administrative support.

With flexible working hours and location as well as relatively low entry barriers, the IT-BPO is a source of both employment and entrepreneurship opportunity for women. India, China and the Philippines are amongst the world's leading BPO providers⁹⁸. In India, the BPO industry

⁹⁶ World Economic Forum (2016). *The Fourth Industrial Revolution: what it means, how to respond*. Davos-Klosters, Switzerland.

⁹⁷ ILO (2016) *Technological changes and work in the future: Making technology work for all*. 1st issue, note series: The Future of Work Centenary Initiative

⁹⁸ World Bank (2016). *World Development Report 2016: Digital Dividends*. Washington DC: World Bank.

was estimated to have revenues of 20.9 billion USD (fiscal year 2012-2013)⁹⁹. The BPO services include voice process, semi voice process or back of office support, medical transcription, medical billing, data entry and data processing, data conversion services, IT help desk services, e-mail support, knowledge process outsourcing, recruitment process outsourcing, education process outsourcing, legal process outsourcing, technical writing and content writing. Requirements for entry level workers are relatively low, including a higher secondary school certificate and no prior experience needed. In 2015, the IT-Business Process Management (IT-BPM) sector was the largest employer in the country with over 35 million jobs, of which women accounted for 34 per cent of the workforce in 2015 and the number is rising¹⁰⁰. Women constituted 28 per cent of job applicants, up by 5 per cent over 2012, and formed 51 per cent of entry level recruitment in 2016¹⁰¹.

While technological advances are producing alternative forms of work for women, it needs to be highlighted that precarious contracts and lack of occupational, safety and security regulations also heighten the risks for women working in the industry. Moreover, if current gender gaps in internet access persist, only a small proportion of women will have access to such opportunities.

IT and women entrepreneurs

Technology can enhance opportunities and efficiency gains for women entrepreneurs in their production and management operations. The ESCAP report on ‘Fostering Women’s Entrepreneurship in ASEAN: Transforming Prospects, Transforming Societies’ (forthcoming), highlights how innovations in ICTs are helping women entrepreneurs overcome major barriers in terms of access to finance and credit; networking to build social capital, capacity and skills; growth markets; and participation in global gender-sensitive policy dialogue. For example, We Connect International¹⁰² offers an online marketplace where women entrepreneurs can showcase their products. In Singapore, women entrepreneurs are using crowdfunded-platforms to access funding and other resources. Digital financial services such as mobile-based services can also help women overcome specific challenges arising from time poverty or constraints to physical mobility.

However, for many women, access to technology is still out of reach. According to ITU estimates in 2015, the gap in internet penetration rates between men and women in Asia and the Pacific stood at 17.6 per cent in 2015¹⁰³. Data further indicates a large gap between male and female mobile phone ownership, although this gap narrows slightly for mobile phone usage¹⁰⁴. According to a 2015 GSMA report, globally there are 1.7 billion females in the low

⁹⁹ Mitra, R. M. (2013). *The information technology and business process outsourcing industry: diversity and challenges in Asia*. Asian Development Bank.

¹⁰⁰ NASSCOM (2015). *The IT-BPM Sector in India: Strategic Review 2015*. New Delhi.

¹⁰¹ PTI (2016). *IT-BPM sector increasingly becoming women-centric: Nasscom*. The Economic Times, 15th of March, 2016. Available at: <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/tech/ites/it-bpm-sector-increasingly-becoming-women-centric-nasscom/articleshow/51413710.cms> [2017-02-13]

¹⁰² Learn more at: www.weconnectinternational.org

¹⁰³ ITU (2016). *Measuring the information: Society report 2016*. Geneva.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

and middle income countries are not owning a mobile phone. Women in South Asia in particular are 38 per cent less likely to own a phone than men¹⁰⁵. As more services are made available online, efforts need to be made to ensure that women entrepreneurs are provided equal access to the infrastructure and capacity to fully leverage the potential of online commercial and financial opportunities.

Technological upgrading and its association with defeminization

Another important factor to consider when contemplating women in the future world of work is that when industries are upgraded along the supply chain into higher technology or higher skilled work, these jobs often become “defeminized” regardless of the skill and education level of women workers. In essence, when previously feminized jobs in the supply chain become better jobs, they are defeminized, reflecting market power and discriminatory gender norms rather than skills¹⁰⁶. This is supported by studies showing that generally, feminizing and defeminizing labour-intensive industries contributed most to changes in female shares of total manufacturing employment and that within-industry effects were more important than employment reallocation effects. Within labour-intensive industries, textiles and apparel are the largest drivers of changes in female shares of employment. Technological upgrading is at the centre of this issue as it has been found to be associated with defeminization¹⁰⁷. This opens up for the question of whether this is caused by women lagging behind in technological skills and/or women being pushed out for the benefit of men when a sector gains higher status due to technological advancement.

One study finds that the defeminization in Southeast Asia has been due to the high levels of female intensity achieved in the 1980s and the dramatic industrial upgrading experienced in the region in the last couple of decades¹⁰⁸. One reason emphasized for this correlation is the anti-female bias in labour demand changes that result from output shifts in developing countries that are successful in upgrading their industry out of low-skill intensive manufacture and into higher-tech production. The so-called “high-road” of industrialization would thus be associated with defeminization while the less technologically advanced “low road” is associated with continued heavy reliance on low paid women¹⁰⁹. The study also finds that the gender wage gap and educational attainment cannot account for these shifts in female intensity, which suggests that gender stereotypes about work and occupational segmentation are important in structuring female employment. Research furthermore shows that in Republic of Korea, Malaysia and Taiwan, China, defeminization in manufacturing industries is associated with technological

¹⁰⁵ GSMA (2015). *Connected Women 2015: Bridging the gender gap: Mobile access and usage in low- and middle-income countries*. Available at: <http://www.gsma.com/mobilefordevelopment/programmes/connected-women/bridging-gender-gap>

¹⁰⁶ McGowan, L. et al. (2016) *Women’s Labour Rights and Economic Power, Now and in the Future*. UN Women. Expert Group Meeting: Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work. Geneva, Switzerland. 26-28 September 2016.

¹⁰⁷ Kucera, D. and Tejani, S. (2014) *Feminization, Defeminization, and Structural Change in Manufacturing*. ILO, Geneva.

¹⁰⁸ Tejani, S., and Milberg, W. (2010). Global defeminization? Industrial upgrading, occupational segmentation and manufacturing employment in middle-income countries. *Feminist Economics*, 22(2), 24-25.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

upgrading and employers' preference for male workers in more technologically sophisticated jobs is highlighted as a cause for this¹¹⁰. This demonstrates that the issue of women lagging behind in tech-savviness does not provide the complete reason for the association between technological upgrading and defeminization.

As previously discussed, the future labour market will change extensively as technological advancements causes job displacements. However, a key part of the economy that can be expected to elude displacement is the feminized sector of care work, as the nature of care work is dependent on human interaction and emotional intelligence. While this work can be done by both men and women, given that women are losing opportunities as jobs become more technologically intensive, it is possible that women will be forced to take again jobs identified with the bodily and emotional sphere, which would increase the gendered division of labour. Alongside this development is the crisis of care. This refers to a transformation whereby society as a whole is becoming less able and willing to provide caring labour, an indispensable component of human wellbeing, and is prompted by salary increases and subsequent more extensive outsourcing of care work. The feminization of migration illustrates this, as over half of all migrant workers in Asia are female among which domestic work is the dominant profession¹¹¹.

As an alternative future vision for a new economic order complementing the green economy and addressing the multiple systemic challenges, in particular the crisis of care, İlkkaracan has introduced the concept of “a purple economy”¹¹². The purple economy refers to an economic order which is organized around sustainability of caring labour through a redistributive internalization of the costs of care into the workings of the system just as the green economy is organized around sustainability of provisioning by nature through internalization of environmental costs into production and consumption patterns. The green economy acknowledges that we depend on earth's natural resources as an indispensable component of human well-being, and therefore we must create an economic system that respects the integrity of ecosystems. The purple economy acknowledges that we also depend on caring labour as another indispensable component of human well-being, and hence we must create an economic system that accounts for the value of care work and enables its provisioning in a sustainable manner, without reverting to mechanisms that reproduce inequalities by gender, class, and origin.

Unless women are provided with more and more diverse skills, particularly in Information and Communication Technology (ICT) and other technologies, they will face the risk of being further displaced to care work due to the future shifts in the labour market. Women are currently underrepresented in the ICT field and are lagging behind men in technological skills. Since 90

¹¹⁰ Kucera, D. and Tejani, S. (2014) *Feminization, Defeminization, and Structural Change in Manufacturing*. ILO, Geneva.

¹¹¹ UN Women (2012). *Domestic work and migration in Asia. Factsheet*. Available at: <http://asiapacific.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2012/9/factsheet-domestic-work-and-migration-in-asia#view> [2017-02-14]

¹¹²

per cent of all future jobs will require ICT skills and be characterized by technological advancement¹¹³, this has the potential to confine many women into non-technological sectors such as care work. With an increasing demand of care work, salaries are expected to decrease and the work to become increasingly vulnerable in terms of social protection and working conditions. This will have a particular impact on female migrant domestic workers, who are already an especially vulnerable group. Therefore, while many women will be needed in care work, it is important to "defeminize" the sector as well as improve its wages and working conditions.

Section V: Recommendations

It cannot be emphasized enough that women's economic empowerment and inclusion in the future world of work is essential for the collective wellbeing and the future of our integrated and global economy. The global economy will not be able to yield the inclusive growth that generates decent work for all workers, improves livelihoods for all and reduces poverty if the women economic empowerment is not prioritized by governments, regional institutions, multilateral institutions and policymakers. Two trends are observed in Asia and the Pacific. On the one hand the contradictory effects of growth as it is exemplified by India which currently has both the fastest growing economy and decreasing FLFP and the rapid transformation that is likely to shift women to care work which is an aspect of the economy that technology cannot substitute easily. These two trends can have a negative effect on women's economic empowerment in absolute and relative terms. The following recommendations are therefore made with urgency and with hope that the economic and technological advancements of our time will lead us to a sustainably prosperous and inclusive future of work.

Design macroeconomic policy to mobilize, distribute and allocate the maximum possible level of resources to realize women's economic rights and to reduce gender inequality. This includes:

- Implement economic policies that integrate and are accountable to human rights standards.
- Consider the total economy that includes care work and the environment.
- Expand and reprioritize fiscal expenditures to foster significant new investment in social care infrastructure, education, health care and support for the productive capacity of informal economy workers.
- Recognize that building human capital is an investment of equal importance to building physical and financial capital.
- Promote investing in technology to enhance agricultural and marine economy and tourism outputs through robust value addition, access to market and cooperatives.
- Promote investing in research and technology for women and girls to address the gendered digital divide and enable women to leverage technology for entrepreneurship and economic development to enhance women's economic empowerment in the changing world of work.
- Use gender responsive budgeting techniques to translate these commitments to expenditures and make them more visible.
- Recognize, reduce and redistribute care work between the market and the state and among men and women by collecting accurate time use information, investing in physical and social infrastructure and the public provision of quality child care, education and elder care, and implementing policies that support the equal distribution in the household of the provision of care.
- Ensure that unpaid care work and social reproduction are fully integrated into the formulation and evaluation of macroeconomic policies.

- Enact monetary and fiscal policies that promote and support decent work and full employment for women and men.
- Developing and financing gender-responsive strategies to prevent, mitigate and manage the impact of climate change in line with international and regional agreements.

Address structural barriers to decent work and full employment for women workers:

- Fulfil ILO Recommendation 202 that creates universal social protection floors to ensure access to basic social protections for all workers without regard to sex, nationality, race, employment or migration status.
- Ratify and implement CEDAW with specific attention to Articles 1, 4, 11, 13, 14 and 15.
- Prioritise labour market access for young women as first-time entrants to the labour market by ensuring that they have access to appropriate education, technical and vocational skills; opportunities for accessing high productivity and high pay sectors.
- Ensuring safety of girls in educational facilities at all levels; promoting second chance education for girls who drop out of school prematurely; promoting STEM education and innovation training for girls; and protect their intellectual property rights.
- Closing the knowledge and skills gap affecting women and girls by leveraging technology and anticipating technological changes that negatively affect women and girls.
- Transform the cultural norms that prevent women entering the labour force.
- Enact policies that regulate labour markets to ensure equal pay for equal work, access to maternity and paternity leave, and regulate hours and ensure work-life balance.
- Recognize that access to care services is an essential component of the social protection floor and should be guaranteed as such.
- Ensure the portability of social protection, social security and labour rights, across sectors and national borders.
- Support tripartite engagement between policy makers, employers and women workers and their unions, organisations and allies to redress the particular systemic discrimination that women workers face.
- Build a robust and gender-inclusive labour rights inspection, monitoring and adjudication system capable of identifying and remediating gendered labour rights violations, such as gender-based violence in the world of work and discrimination.
- Undertake concerted and immediate efforts to eliminate gender-based violence (GBV) in the world of work, recognizing that this violence increases gender inequalities, denies women workers voice and agency and imposes economic costs on women, families and economies.
- Recognize the importance of assets for women's work and livelihoods and promote equal access to and control over land and property (joint titling policy, no inheritance discrimination against women and girls, etc).

- Remove barriers and constraints that restrict women's enterprise development in the business enabling environment.
- Recognise informal workers' need for access to social protection, including occupational injury, disability insurance, paid sick leave, occupational health and safety, health, pension, and unemployment provisioning.
- City planning everywhere and in developing countries specifically, should provide space with supporting facilities for the economic activities of informal economy workers.
- Sex-disaggregate data and collect time use data to inform and monitor the impact of policies and programs within and beyond national boundaries.
- Ensure that all the SDG goals, targets and indicators are sex disaggregated and that governments integrate consistent measurement in their national survey instruments.

Protect labour and community organizing and the inclusion of women in all levels of economic and social policy decision-making:

- Protect civil and political rights including the right to freedom of association, assembly and speech and the right to organize and collectively bargain that allow women activists to organize unions and other collectives and be decision-makers in economic policies that affect their work.
- Give legal recognition to informal workers' organizations—such as unions, cooperatives and voluntary associations—by providing an enabling environment for their registration, and recognizing their right to participation in tripartite (state, business, and labour) fora.
- Protect labour activists and other human rights defenders from retaliation.
- Promote and implement labour laws that improve the bargaining power and position of women in labour markets.
- Enact policies that support women's enterprise development in the context of decent work which will include banking the unbanked, financial inclusion of women, training, positive government procurement commitments and sectoral policies that unlock credit and access to markets for women's enterprises.
- Ensure gender balance in decision-making at all levels, especially pertaining to economic policy, programs and services including corporate boards, central banks, international financial institutions and governance mechanisms pertaining to the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and development banks, and the World Trade Organisation.

Reform trade and development policy to hold governments and corporations to account and emphasize long-term inclusive and pro poor growth:

- Conduct research into the gendered impacts of macroeconomic policies, and specific trade and investment agreements including their effects on unpaid work, gender wage gaps, labour market segregation, women's access to decent work, women's access to

and control over productive resources and economic decision-making at home, at work, nationally and globally.

- Regulate business activities to respect women's rights and meaningful, long-term community investments that promote decent work for women which results in non-discrimination and zero violence in the world of work.
- Recognize that these policies need to be embedded in institutional frameworks that are transparent, free from corruption and democratic.
- Ensure that the sustainable development goals are not undermined by trade policies.
- Use commitments to the SDGs including goals 5, 8, 1.3, 1.4, and 10 to encourage intersectionality, stimulate coordinated action and track meaningful transformation in labour markets for women.
- Link accountability for the SDG commitments to the human rights frameworks and in particular for Goal 5, to CEDAW and ILO Conventions 100 and 111.
- Regulating industries to address the impact that climate change and land degradation has on the economy and women's economic empowerment and rights;

Address the particular needs of the most marginalized women due to their status, type or location of work:

Migrant women workers:

- Promote movement with choice for women and men of different skills groups and recognize the skills required to care across the gamut of caring work from domestic workers, nurses, and medical technicians to educators.
- Regulate the role of private intermediaries and labour brokers in migration.
- Support migrant workers organizing in home and host countries to demand their full labour rights.
- Enforce laws against trafficking, including through asset forfeiture.
- Increase the number of member states signatories to ILO Convention 189 and adhering to applying ILO Recommendation 204.
- Recognize the transnational nature of social protection systems in host countries that demand and absorb migrant labour and ensure the portability of skills and pensions and other social benefits across national borders.
- Recognize that remittances create fiscal space for home governments and link this fiscal space to state obligations to invest in care and resolve care deficits exacerbated by migration.

Indigenous and rural women:

- Recognize environmental goods and services as public goods and acknowledge that the respect for indigenous peoples' knowledge, cultures and traditional practices contributes to the sustainable and equitable development and proper management of the environment.

- Support women's right to own and use land, including collective and usufruct rights to land and common property and implement actions based on Free Prior and Informed Consent.
- Uphold CEDAW / C / GC / 34. General recommendation No. 34 (2016) on the rights of Rural Women, which recognizes the contributions and knowledge of rural women as critical to achieving food security, reducing poverty and supports recommendations on Employment [article 14] that address gender discrimination in rural labour markets.
- Engage rural, indigenous and tribal peoples and women's organizations and representations among these groups in national and global policymaking, particularly where this pertains to investments in infrastructure, mining and extractive industries and trade in environmental goods and services that affect the livelihoods and wellbeing of indigenous peoples and their ecosystems.
- Recall the invitation to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) to consider the issue of empowerment of indigenous women as a theme at a future session, as stated in paragraph 19 of General Assembly resolution 69/2, and acknowledge the intent and efforts to place this issue as a focus area of its sixty-first session. We invite CSW to consider further the issue of empowerment of indigenous women as a priority theme at a future session.
- Support the economic activities of indigenous women, in consultation with them and take into account indigenous peoples' traditional knowledge, so as to strengthen their leadership and improve their development, in particular by enhancing their equal access to productive resources and agricultural inputs, such as land, seeds, financial services, technology, transportation and information.

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