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## **REORIENTING DEVELOPMENT: TOWARDS AN ENGENDERED EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY**

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# **REORIENTING DEVELOPMENT: TOWARDS AN ENGENDERED EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY\***

Selim Jahan\*\*

## **ABSTRACT**

Development strategies, in the name of gender-neutral, are gender-blind. The gender blindness of development strategies are derived from the gender-insensitiveness of dominant development paradigms, which, in the name of work, do not make any distinction between productive and reproductive work and does not differentiate, in the name of household, the asymmetries faced by its different members on the basis of sex. Given the nature of gender blindness of development strategies, it is clear that issues related to work and employment are at the core of it. For example, if work done by women within households and for the care economy continues to be not properly valued and compensated for, development strategies would be biased against women. If labour supply functions continue to exclude the trade-off between productive and reproductive functions of women, employment strategies would be partial. The failure to recognize the differentiated position of women within households in terms of opportunities also has adverse implications on work, employment and incomes of women. Female employment is crucial for equitable growth and poverty reduction. Enhanced female employment and income also contribute to better priority setting and resource allocation within families, as women are more prudent. Women, however, have been found to be concentrated in low-paying, low productive jobs, they account for major part of temporary, part-time and precarious employment. An employment-friendly strategy is not necessarily gender-sensitive. Engendering employment strategy would require reorienting the macro policies, the incentive mechanisms and catering to specific needs of women as they juggle between their productive and reproductive roles, and protecting their rights and safety as workers.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

*Development, if not engendered, is endangered* – a simple statement, but with far-reaching implications. Any development, which bypasses half of humanity, both in terms of opportunities and outcomes, can neither be meaningful nor sustainable. Yet gender issues are generally not integrated into development strategies, even though there may well be a passing reference to the impact on women. This non-integration are related to two fundamental reasons: first, development strategies focus only on the work of production of goods and services, and ignore the work of reproduction and second, development strategies also treat households as unities, and fail to differentiate the costs and benefits to various household members. Development strategies, in the name of gender-neutral, are thus gender-blind.

Given the nature of gender blindness of development strategies, it is clear that issues related to work and employment are at the core of it. If work done by women within households and for the care economy continues to be not properly valued and compensated for, development strategies would be biased against women. If labour supply functions continue to exclude the trade-off between productive and reproductive functions of women, employment strategies would be partial. The failure to recognize the differentiated position of women within households in terms of opportunities also has adverse implications on work, employment and incomes of women. The lack of gender integration in work and employment biases the content of development strategies and limits the analysis of how they work, or fail to work.

The basic purpose of the present paper is to propose an engendered employment-oriented policy framework. With that objective, the paper starts with an assessment of the origin of gender blindness of development strategies in general. The next section highlights the analytical linkages between employment and gender issues, followed by a quantitative presentation of the employment scenario and how women fit into it. The paper then critically assesses the current overall employment strategies pursued in the developing world. The following section presents an engendered employment policy framework. The paper ends with some concluding remarks.

## 2 WORK AND EMPLOYMENT: GENDER BLINDNESS IN DEVELOPMENT PARADIGMS AND STRATEGIES

The gender blindness of development strategies stems from both the way in which development is conceptualized and public policy is analysed. Even broad concepts of development remain rooted in the production of commodities. The process of human reproduction, which includes child rearing, responsibility for fuel, water, health care, sanitation, and provisioning of other so-called basic needs is left out of account. This is because all these activities are seen as non-monetized processes, undertaken without pay.

Even though human reproduction is not provided for direct material reward, it entails work, which may be termed as *reproductive work* or *domestic labour*. The primary way this work is organized is through gender-ascriptive social relations such as husband and wife, father and mother, in contrast to other social relations such as worker and employer, peasants and landlord. As is well documented, there is sexual division of labour in such work, with the bulk

of it undertaken by women. It is not an outcome of choices freely exercised, but an outcome of social pressures. A critical issue for women is thus how reproductive work is articulated with access to an income.

The articulation of reproductive work with obtaining an income takes different forms in different societies. And it changes significantly in the course of development. But generally, in spite of the variety, reproductive work does not carry with it an entitlement to an independent income. Therefore people who bear the major responsibility for it must either undertake additional work to generate an income of their own (the double burden) or become dependent for income transfers on those who are largely free from this responsibility. That dependence is organized through gender-ascriptive relations, and the terms of that dependence are all too often inimical to self-respect.

This latter point is missed by those who see households as unities, the basic building blocks of society, organized along lines of reciprocity, pooling and sharing. Although it is wrong to leave these positive aspects of the household life out of the picture, there is a wealth of evidence, which indicates that negative aspects of dominance, submission, conflict and violence also structure households.

A concept of development adequate to the needs of everyone must address the process of human reproduction as well as production of commodities, and explicitly reflect the way the two are integrated. It must also reflect relations within as well as between households. It is the absence of these issues that is the fundamental reason for the poor integration of a gender perspective.

But beyond this, there is also a lack of understanding of how gender analysis can be integrated in a discourse that deals not with people, but with abstracts like GNP, industry, agriculture, public and private sector, export, import, balance of payments etc. To integrate gender-analysis at the macroeconomic and social levels of the economy, it is necessary to consider the sexual division of labour and income, both inside and outside the households, and to understand the fact that the relations that are not gender-ascriptive are not gender-neutral either.

Development strategies are typically evaluated in terms of efficiency of resource utilization; savings, investment and growth; human capital formation; poverty and inequality; the role of the State; and participation, democracy and freedom. A gender-aware perspective would broaden the criteria of assessment, not by adding the "impact of women" as a further criterion, but by interpreting these criteria to show the limitations of their gender-blindness. The application of extended criteria would systematically explore the implications for development strategies of the fact that emancipation of women is both a goal in itself and the desired way for achieving development objectives. A gender-aware analysis opens up the possibility of optimum thinking about development strategies. Exclusion of women from development not only leaves women worse off, it impoverishes the whole society.

### **3 WORK, EMPLOYMENT AND GENDER ISSUES: AN ANALYTICAL DISCUSSION**

Work and employment are critical for human development. Productive and remunerative employment contributes to human development in three distinctive ways:

- It provides people with income and livelihoods
- It contributes to human security and the participation of individuals in collective initiatives
- It enhances self-esteem and dignity of human beings.

At a macro-level, employment is the missing link between economic growth and poverty reduction. Economic growth, by itself, is no guarantee for poverty reduction and the linkage between the two is not automatic. Only when economic growth is generated through labour-intensive methods and the benefits of growth are widely distributed, it contributes to poverty reduction. Employment is a key ingredient to ensure an equitable growth.

In fact, there is a growing debate between the issue of growth-led employment and that of employment-led growth. Proponents of growth-led employment maintain that all the roads should lead to the generation of economic growth and more growth. If growth is generated, it will lead to employment creation. But experiences over the years have shown that the growth can be quite jobless and employment is not automatically created out of growth. It depends on the nature of the growth process – how it was organized, what was the technology used and so on. People have, therefore, argued that a win-win situation can be achieved only if an employment-led growth strategy is pursued. If productive employment with skilled workers leads the process, it creates both jobs good rates of growth with equity in benefits as a by-product.

With the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which are basically time-bound quantitative targets to overcome human poverty, taking the centre-stage of development debates and dialogues, the crucial importance of employment has just been reinforced. Employment is a major direct instrument to achieve a number of MDGs, e.g. halving income poverty and hunger by 2015. Indirectly, it will also contribute, through generation of income, to such goals as reduction of child and maternal mortality, universal enrolment in schools, universal access to safe water etc.

Bringing gender issues into the picture has important implications for the analytical framework that links employment, economic growth and poverty reduction. One can start with the labour supply function. Such a function contains a host of explanatory variables ranging from wages to education to time, but not the choice that women have to make between productive and reproductive functions. As a result, the perceived labour supply of society in general and of women in particular represents a sub-optimal situation. And more importantly, strategies undertaken to enhance both labour supply and employment would not produce the maximum results.

The omissions of gender perspective, in the name of gender-neutrality, from the economic growth-poverty reduction linkage can have adverse effects. If labour intensive technology and wider participation in the growth process ensure a strong linkage between the two, then female employment is a critical element. This is partly because most labour-intensive technologies are also women-intensive and partly because participation cannot be broad-based if it bypasses women, half of humanity. A related point is that an employment-led growth strategy, which is critical for poverty reduction, significantly depends on female employment, again because it is labour-intensive.

But there are three other important channels through which female employment can be quite effective in poverty reduction:

- First, female employment also provides income to women. And it has been found that women allocate their money in a more judicious way – they are not only better savers, but they spend major part of their incomes on health and nutrition of their family members and schooling of their children. This has a positive impact on human poverty as it helps overcome deprivations in areas of health and education.
- Second, purchasing power in the hands of women through employment and incomes have been found to have positive impacts on intra-household disparities, particularly against girls within families, in various planes including food intake, health services and education.
- Third, female income through female employment leads to provisioning as safe water and energy so that the time use of women improves since they no longer have to spend 8 hours every day for drinking water or fuel wood fetching. It may have positive impacts on environment as well as on the care economy.

It is also important to recognize that women workers are mostly concentrated in low-productive precarious jobs in the informal sector. They may, therefore, be excluded from the participation aspect of formal employment, as unions are absent in most informal activities. The low status of their jobs may not be fulfilling to them, nor it can enhance their dignity and self-esteem. In many cases, particularly in agriculture, women may bear the major burden of post-harvesting tasks, but without proportionate sharing of benefits.

The widespread engagement of women in the sex industry in many countries and the trafficking of them across countries and regions for that purpose expose them to violence and insecurities, both personal and collective. The fate of the migrant female workers as maids in many cases is no better. The end result is serious violation of their human rights.

But even with all these negativities, women's employment is yet forcefully empowering both for them and also for the whole society. With employment, women feel emancipated, economically and socially. And when half of society feels emancipated, that is empowering for the entire society.

#### **4 THE OVERALL EMPLOYMENT SCENARIO AND THE SITUATION OF WOMEN**

As the twenty-first century unfolds, the global employment situation remains deeply flawed. The persistence of widespread unemployment gives rise to serious concern. Global open unemployment at the end of 2003 has been estimated to be 186 million, about 6% of the world's labour force. Current estimates for 2003 show that 1.39 billion people in the world work, but are still unable to lift themselves or their families above the US\$2 a day poverty line. Among them, 550 million cannot even lift themselves and their families above the extreme US\$1 a day poverty threshold. In fact, people living in poverty in the developing world, about 1.2 billion (living on US\$1 a day) are almost entirely supported by the earnings of the 550 million workers among them – *the working poor*. If those people who work substantially less

than full time, but wish to work more, are included, then one third of the world's labour force of 3 billion are either unemployed or underemployed or earn less than is needed to keep their families out of poverty. With the projected labour force increase and employment opportunities, by 2010, 500 million new jobs will be needed. The ultimate need is to create 1.39 billion decent jobs for those people who work but still live with their families below US\$2 a day poverty line.

In terms of regional trends, in the developed world, the unemployment rate in the industrialized world has declined from 8% to 6.8% during 1993 and 2003. Total employment has increased from 177 million to 193 million in industrialized Europe and from 211 million to 234 million in industrialized economies outside Europe. In most of the developing world and the transition economies, unemployment situation has hardly improved; rather it has deteriorated significantly in a couple of regions (table 1).

TABLE 1  
Trends in unemployment rates (%) in developing regions 1993-2003

Regions	1993	2003
East Asia	2.4	3.3
Middle East and North Africa	12.1	12.2
South Asia	4.8	4.8
South-East Asia	3.9	6.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	11.0	10.9
Transition economies	6.3	9.2

Source: ILO (2004).

Three major concerns with regard to unemployment have been the increasing trend in long-term unemployment, the widespread phenomenon of youth unemployment and changes in the labour market due to ageing. In 2003, nearly 30% of unemployed people in OECD countries were long-term unemployed. In some cases, such as Belgium, Germany and Ireland, more than half of the unemployed were experiencing long-term unemployment. Youth unemployment has also been a major concern. One in every five young people in OECD countries is unemployed. In countries like Poland and Slovakia, the rate is twice as high. Today, nearly 15% of people in the developed world are over 65 and the comparable figure for developing countries is 5%. As a result of higher longevity, more and more older people remain capable of working and would like to do so. It puts pressure on the labour market and has implications for the overall employment and unemployment situations. In 25 years, nearly 23% of the population in the developed region and 10% of the population in the developing world are going to be over 65, with serious implications for labour markets and employment.

Economic growth is often seen as the solution to unemployment. But over time, the world has also been witnessing the phenomenon of jobless growth, where economic growth is propelled mainly by productivity growth without corresponding growth in jobs. The United States economy is a prime example of jobless growth in recent times. In 2003, the transition economies had a GDP growth of 4.5%, but at the same time, it was experiencing an unemployment rate of more than 9%.

Worldwide, patterns of employment have also been changing. Non-agricultural self-employment is on the rise in many regions of the world. Between 1980 and 2000, worldwide it



has increased from 26% of the total non-agricultural employment to 32%. It accounts for as high as 44% of the total non-agricultural employment in Sub-Saharan Africa. Part-time work and temporary employment are no longer characteristics of the labour market of the developing world. Instead such phenomena are increasingly observed in developed countries as well. In 2000, part-time employment accounted for 16% of total employment in OECD countries and temporary work accounted for 12% of total employment in European Union.

In developing economies, the contribution of the informal sector is critical – both in terms of providing employment as well as in creating income (table 2). Poor-quality jobs, low pay, overwork, unsafe and unhealthy working conditions, job and income security are widespread in the informal sector.

TABLE 2

**Contribution of the informal sector to the developing economies, 2000**

Regions	Share in non-agricultural employment (%)	Share in GDP (%)
Sub-Saharan Africa	72	41
Asia	65	31
Latin America	51	29
North Africa	48	27

Source: ILO (2002).

Some of the above characteristics in labour markets are, in part, reflections of the globalization process. But globalization has also affected labour markets in other fundamental ways:

- Globalization has led to *flexible* labour markets, which in order to be competitive, throw away labour rights, workers protection and safety, and working conditions.
- Globalization has also changed the face of the labour force, particularly in developed economies. Today, 25% of the Australian labour force is foreign-born, and in Switzerland, it is 18% and in the US 11%.
- Globalization has also resulted in highly segmented labour markets. The labour markets for highly skilled people are basically global, whereas the labour markets for unskilled labourers are not only limited to national boundaries, but sometimes they are very much localized.

In recent times, two widespread phenomena have had serious adverse impacts on the labour markets and employment in different parts of the world. The first one is the HIV/AIDS and the second one is conflicts:

- Worldwide, people in their prime working age (25-45 years) have been the major victims of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. It had serious impacts on labour force in many countries, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the incidence of the virus is the highest. In agriculture, where the majority of the Africans work, the loss of adults to AIDS had serious negative impacts. In 1999, for example, the death of a breadwinner in Zimbabwe was estimated to cut a farm's production of maize in small-scale farming and communal areas by more than 60%. A Kenyan sugarcane estate has reported a loss of 6000 days of labour because of sickness of workers from HIV infection. The HIV epidemic has also impacted adversely the workforce in

other sectors. In 1998, Zambia lost about 1,300 teachers to AIDS, equivalent to two-thirds of the annual output of newly trained teachers.

- Conflicts also have adversely affected labour markets and employment in different parts of the world. By 2001, the total number of internally displaced people as a result of conflicts has been estimated to be at least 25 million. Labour markets in conflict areas were disrupted and the employment opportunities there were in disarray.

With this overall labour market and employment scenario, if we analyse the situation with a gender perspective, what sort of picture do we get? Let us start with non-agricultural wage employment. Trends in women's share of wage employment in non-agricultural employment from the mid-1980s are mixed. Women's share of non-agricultural wage employment approaches to that of men (in the range of 45-55%) in 39 out of 87 countries for which data are available. Although women's share is increasing in most countries and barriers to their employment are crumbling, the benefits to women are less clear. Some evidence suggests that gender gaps persist in pay and conditions even when women's share of jobs approaches parity with men's share.

Self-employment has become more important in most of the developing regions in providing jobs to women (table 3). In fact, today, women constitute 51% of total self-employment in Latin America with men accounting for the remaining 49%.

TABLE 3

**Female self-employment as percentage of non-agricultural employment**

<b>Regions</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>2000</b>
World	28	34
Developed countries	11	10
Africa	58	53
Latin America	30	54
Asia	24	32

Source: ILO (2002).

Women also constitute the major part of part-time and temporary employment in most countries. Even in OECD countries, women's share of part-time employment ranges from 60% in Turkey to 97% in Sweden. Women part-time workers are concentrated in sales (33%), followed by clerical works (25%). Hourly earnings for part-time workers represent between 55 to 90 % of those of full-time workers. In 9 of 15 European Union countries, women account for half or more of temporary employment. Female temporary employment is mainly concentrated in service providing activities. Most women workers in many countries are also home-based, either as self-employed or as wage-employed. In Benin and Guatemala, more than 70% home-based workers were women. In Venezuela, it was more than 60%.

The poorest women in the world are employed in agriculture or in the informal sector and their work is vastly undercounted in employment statistics. In the developing world, women's contribution accounts for more than three-fourths of the post-harvesting work in agriculture. Even in overall agriculture, the share of female employment is quite significant in some countries. For example, in Uganda, women account for 75% of the overall agricultural employment. The involvement of women in informal activities is illustrated in table 4. In some

countries such as Benin and Chad, the share of women's informal employment in their non-agricultural employment is as high as 95%. In a large country like India, women's informal employment accounts for more than 85% of their non-agricultural employment. Within informal employment of women, self-employment accounts for more than 70% in Sub-Saharan Africa, more than 60% in Latin America and more than 50% in Asia. In Benin, women account for more than 90% of employment in trade activities in the informal sector; in Mali it is 81%, and in the Philippines it is 72%.

TABLE 4  
**Women's involvement in informal sector, 2000**

<b>Regions</b>	<b>Share of informal employment in women's non-agricultural employment</b>
Sub-Saharan Africa	84
Asia	65
Latin America	58
North Africa and Middle East	43

Source: ILO(2002).

Women's non-agricultural informal sector GDP accounts for more than one-fourth of total non-agricultural GDP in Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali. Women's employment in trade activities in the informal sector contributes to more than 60% of income from those activities in Benin and more than 40% in Chad and Mali.

But most of the women's work remains unpaid. In Cuba, even if women account for 55% of total hours worked by both women and men, only 29% of it is paid compared to 67% for men. Unpaid female family workers account for 83% of total female labour force in Bangladesh, 82% in Mali and 64% in Turkey. And in majority of countries, the trend is on the rise.

Over the years, with globalization, three major characteristics of female employment has become quite dominant in many countries:

- First, women's employment in garment industry has become quite phenomenal in many instances. In Bangladesh, nearly 2 million women are employed in the garment industry, which, in addition to direct export earnings, generate revenues of \$2 billion every year from linkages with the rest of the economy. These garment workers provide for 46% of their family incomes.
- Second, women constitute the major part of employment in the Export-Processing Zones (EPZs). In the *maquiladoras* of Mexico, 60% of the 800,000 workers were women in 1996. More than three-fourths of the 200,000 people employed in the EPZs in the Philippines are women.
- Third, women also account for a major part of migrant workers. The Philippines have about 6 million migrant workers overseas and a significant part of them are women, working as maids, nurses and others. Sri Lankan nurses also constitute a major share of its overseas workers.

But the female workers, who work in all these activities, are subject to discrimination, violation of rights and safety and violence. In many garments industries, workers are not given lunch breaks, they are not allowed to go out and in some cases they are put in locked factories.

As a result, many women have died when fire broke out and they could not get out. In many EPZ enterprises, women are not allowed to unionize. Migrant workers are often subject to trafficking and forced to prostitution.

## **5 OVERALL EMPLOYMENT POLICES AND STRATEGIES: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT**

Employment is perceived as the missing link between economic growth and poverty reduction. In fact, productive and remunerative employment is a critical element for equitable growth. Thus in contemporary policy debates, overall employment strategies are discussed in the context of equitable growth, redistribution, poverty reduction, and social safety nets.

The major policy issue in the context of the growth-employment nexus is whether a country should pursue growth-led employment or employment-led growth. A growth-led employment strategy puts all its faith in growth, believing that economic growth, if achieved, will automatically create jobs as an outcome of growth. But experiences have shown that *jobless growth* may be an outcome of growth-led employment strategy. This is because there is no automatic link between economic growth and employment generation and economic growth, generated primarily through productivity growth, results in jobless growth.

Thus in recent times, there has been co-existence of economic growth and high unemployment. During the 1990s, the output growth in the developed world has been more than 2.5% per annum, but with an annual employment growth rate of only 1% and an average unemployment rate standing at more than 6%. There has been economic growth, but without corresponding job creation or absorption of labour. Thus jobless growth has been the favour of the day. Yet more and accelerated growth has been argued to be the recipe for job creation. Even where jobs were created because of economic growth, job creation has been more of a residual. Employment under these circumstances could not influence the nature and characteristics of growth and as such could not be an effective instrument in equitable sharing of benefits of economic growth.

Only employment-led growth can ensure creation of jobs and generation of economic growth simultaneously. For example, labour-based approaches in infrastructure can simultaneously contribute to economic growth and job creation. An employment-led growth strategy is needed for three fundamental reasons:

- First, economic growth is seen as the magic potion to solve every problem including unemployment. But growth does not automatically translate itself into job creation. It depends on the nature of economic growth – the organization of the growth, its generation process and characteristics – all of which can be influenced only through an employment-led growth strategy. Only an employment-led growth can ensure jobs and growth at the same time.
- Second, an employment-led growth can have targeted strategy for gender-sensitive employment.
- Third, an employment-led growth, through emphasizing highly productive labour-intensive technology, ensures an equitable share of growth in favour of workers, a critical requirement for poverty reduction.

Employment policies for poverty reduction in general address two issues – creating new jobs for the labour market entrants and improving productivity of existing jobs. These require:

- Stable macro policies
- Conducive environment for acceleration of the rate of investment
- Growth of labour-intensive sectors of the economy
- Efficiency in resource use
- Improved governance

The crucial elements of conducive macro strategies include employment-friendly stable tax, monetary and commercial policies; resources; and institutions. With these kinds of strategies, it is possible to generate a growth process, which will ensure equitable growth – a critical condition for poverty reduction and create broad-based productive and remunerative job – again an important instrument for poverty reduction.

If employment is to contribute to poverty reduction, it must raise the income levels of the poorest groups of the society. And that can be achieved through the following policy channels:

- An increase in the employment opportunities of the working poor
- An increase in productivity through
  - Increases in productive assets of poor people
  - Provision of financial capital
  - Access to education and skill training
- An increase in wage rate

Agricultural growth can help reduce poverty if its labour intensity increases and if an appropriate environment prevails to ensure that marginal and small farmers can participate in it. Especially the demand for hired labour must rise, if agricultural growth is expected to reduce poverty.

The other option for enhancing income levels of poor people is to create a scope for supplementary earnings through self-employment, where not only the wage labourer, but her/his entire family may participate, thus raising the labour force participation rate and thereby the family income.

Building the skill of poor people through education and training, with access to basic social services like health services, safe water, basic sanitation is crucial. These people also critically need access to productive resources like land, equipments, credit and other productive packages. The important issue here is public provisioning of basic social services and package provisioning of productive resources. The public provisioning of basic social services to poor people must be protected during economic and financial crises.

In terms of the policy package and the policy strategies for the informal sector, the following issues are pertinent:

- Informal economy and the issue of poverty reduction are inter-twined. While a greater incidence of human poverty may lead to an expanding informal economy,

such an economy, when properly influenced, can play an instrumental role in poverty reduction. There is thus a need for a two-pronged approach – policies and strategies, both overall and targeted, to address the issue of poverty and policies and strategies to make informal economy a mechanism to overcome poverty.

- The dynamics between the formal and the informal economy must be addressed from a perspective of graduation. Entities may start in the informal economy, but they should graduate to the formal economy. If this dynamics can be ensured, then it may represent a win-win situation for the entire economy.
- Policy strategies for the informal economy have to ensure a proper balance in many areas. They must address both the entrepreneurs and the workers. And the strategies have to combine incentives and protection – the former more geared to entrepreneurs and the latter more to workers.
- In areas of incentives, the policy package for the informal economy must cover such aspects as access to productive resources including credit; access to social services like health, safe water and basic sanitation, education; highly productive labour-intensive technologies.
- In terms of protection, informal sector needs the proper legal framework, relevant regulation system, protection of workers' rights and welfare.
- Targeted measures are needed in the informal economy for the employment of all kinds of working people, particularly for working poor. Apprenticeship for the youth may be a good mechanism for ensuring their productive employment.

With globalization, new vulnerabilities have been introduced in labour markets of both developed and developing countries. Countries in order to be competitive in global product markets throw away labour rights, workers' safety, and good working conditions. Such flexible labour markets produce vulnerabilities both for employment and for workers. Insecurities in the labour markets are compounded during times of financial and economic crises as have been observed in the Asian Crisis of 1998. The new vulnerabilities in labour markets call for:

- Expanding employment, with a focus of creating reasonably productive jobs
- Constantly upgrading the skill of workers, particularly the unskilled, through training, on-the-job dissemination of technical know-how and building the flexibility in skills needed to move around
- Maintaining reasonable compensation, the minimum wage and accepted labour standards and rights
- Increasing the productivity of the informal sector – through tax holidays, duty exemptions, lower interest rates and access to credit.

Globalization has also two other major implications. First, with globalization, more and more people are forced to join the labour markets to make supplementary incomes to family earnings. As a result, the care economy suffers. Second, with resource base of the state eroding because of globalization and shrinking indirect tax base in many countries, the social welfare system is threatened.

In recent times, there has been grater demand on employment strategies for being socially and environmentally sustainable. Identifying, through broad-based dialogues, the

social costs of various employment generating options and minimizing the natural resource depletion and environmental pollution created by employment activities are major elements of social and environmental sustainability of employment strategies.

Employment generation policies, for meaningful formulation and successful implementation, need proper institutional framework and support. At one level, the institutional framework needs an alliance among different actors such as national and sub-national governments, private sector, communities and institutions of civil society as well as external development partners. Such an alliance is needed for identifying a meaningful strategy through broad-based dialogues, for mobilizing resources, for successful implementation of strategies and also for monitoring and evaluation. At another level, it means actions by different actors to create jobs – wage employment as well as self-employment on the ground, undertaking measures for enhancing productivity and wages, looking after working conditions, workers' safety and their rights.

## **6 ENGENDERED EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY FRAMEWORK: SOME CRITICAL ISSUES**

A critical look through gender perspectives at overall employment strategies immediately highlights one major point – these strategies seem to be gender-neutral, but they are gender blind.

Employment-led growth while stressing labour-intensive technologies overlooks two major issues. First, while labour supply of men may depend on wage, education level and income; for women, one major explanatory factor is the division of their time between economic and care work, between productive and reproductive work. But the overall labour supply function totally ignores that issue. Second, there are many areas of work where female workers should not be engaged because it may hamper their reproductive function. The issue of labour intensity does not take it into account.

Macroeconomic policies – monetary, fiscal and commercial – are not engendered in almost all cases. Therefore, even when they are made employment-friendly, they are not gender-sensitive. As a result, these policies hardly contribute to female employment or address the constraints that they face in labour markets. Women have very limited access to productive resources. In many societies, they do not have land rights and they do not get their share in credit. They also have an unequal access to basic social services. Thus they are disproportionately educated and skill-trained.

Policies seem to be missing with regard to female employment in the context of flexible labour markets. The rapid growth of female employment and women's entry into occupations previously dominated by men has led to the *feminization of the labour force*. Yet it has occurred in the context of economic liberalization, financial deregulation and privatization, leading to a more flexible workforce and the casualization of employment. The non-regular forms of employment, which are growing, are unstable and insecure, and often do not offer non-wage benefits to the women workers, who are outside the coverage of standard labour legislation. In fact, policies seem to enforce the concentration of women in low productive and low paying jobs, in part-time and temporary employment and in informal activities. The policies often do not address the wage-disparities that they face.

Strategies do not look at issues of higher turn over rates among female workers and the incentive mechanisms that they need; often women are hired last and fired first. Policies are not sensitive to their reproductive roles, or their needs in workplace, or their rights. For example, in terms of their needs in workplaces, in many cases, there are inadequate facilities for childcare for working mothers. The provision of services including transport services, health and housing facilities would encourage women's employment in urban industries. Since a large part of women workers in many developing countries are in export-oriented industries, there is also a need to minimize the adjustment costs for female workers who lose jobs because of fluctuations of export growth.

Policies also seem to overlook the issue of women's dual role in productive sectors as well as care givers and the phenomenon of more women joining the labour force to supplement family incomes and its implications on the care economy. There are no systematic strategies to provide public provisioning of care for children, old people or people with disabilities. Incentives mechanisms are also absent to induce the private sector to come forward. In fact, at a time when there is a greater need for an expansion of social protection in developing countries that would enable women with family responsibilities to compete equally with men, the social security systems are under stress and attack and there is no countervailing policies to overcome that.

Global policies are also adversely affecting women. The introduction of social clauses into international trade agreements, the pressures from the developed world to impose labour and environmental standards on imports from the developing world are more likely to have more negative impacts on cheap female labour, and sometimes on child labour.

Very few effective policies are in place to deal with various kinds of discriminations that women face in labour markets. These discriminations may vary from nature of jobs and upward mobility in jobs to disparities in wages and earnings and other benefits. There are serious mistreatments of workers in workplaces ranging from being locked up in factories (e.g. in garment industries in many developing countries) to denial of right to unionize (e.g. in various EPZs) to sexual harassment to violence and rape.

The well-being and welfare of female workers should be addressed not only for equity and empowerment of women, but also for broader development. The macro and micro-level consequences of enhanced economic power for women, i.e. employment and income under their control, are well known. Strong linkages between female employment and their late marriage and childbearing, lower fertility rate and having fewer and healthier children are well established. Women's productive capabilities have contributed significantly to food supply, industrial goods and manufacturing exports. Their contributions in the service sector are also quite significant. The use and expansion of women's productive capacities is a necessary condition for equitable growth and poverty reduction.



## **7 CONCLUSIONS**

Labour theory and employment strategies need to be reoriented with gender-sensitiveness so that they take into account the issues and constraints described. Such a reorientation will not be accomplished through a band-aid approach; rather it would require reorientation in the paradigm and re-examination of policies and strategies. And we have to do it, because in a world where women constitute half of humanity, not doing it is not an option. And unless and until it is done, development will not be engendered and if it is not, we shall continue to endanger development.

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