



IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON WOMEN EMPLOYMENT

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ABSTRACT

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus the existence of many inequalities in the world of work, including disparities in women and men's engagement in paid and unpaid work. These inequalities are further widened by the crisis, but the data required to understand and monitor these trends are scarcely available for varying reasons. For making policy data should be proper. But data gaps persist across all domains. Data gaps has worsened in the short term with many surveys being postponed, cancelled or facing major operational difficulties. Many countries do not have up to date estimates of employment and unemployment, Concerted and substantial efforts will be needed to try and fill data gaps as well measures to mitigate the problems of women workers which will be even more challenging in a time of crisis. One important action that can be taken is the implementation of the latest statistical standards by all govts notably those adopted at the 19th ICLS in October 2013 and making provision in the budget to address the issues of women workers.

KEYWORDS : women workers, employment, covid-19

1-Introduction:

For women, who have been marginalised in most parts of the developing world, the pandemic has significantly increased the unequal nature of development. There is ample evidence which shows that women are more adversely affected than men by the social and economic effects of infectious disease outbreaks. They bear the greater brunt of household and care responsibilities, such as closure of schools, caring for the sick and elderly family members, and they are also at greater risk of domestic violence. Women remain disproportionately disadvantaged by reduced access to healthcare services and are deprived of proper nutritional intake during pandemics that impact food security provisions of the population.

2-Studies on impact of Covid on Women Employment:

*According to the ILO's World Employment and Social Outlook Trends 2022 Report, the disproportionate impact of the crisis on women's employment is expected to last in the coming years. The closing of education and training institutions have cascading long-term implications for young people, particularly those without internet access. "Two years into this crisis, the outlook remains fragile and the path to recovery is slow and uncertain," said ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder. "We are already seeing potentially lasting damage to labour markets, along with concerning increases in poverty and inequality. Many workers are being required to shift to new types of work.

*New global data covering 189 countries and territories expose the motherhood penalty faced by millions of women around the world in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. With collaboration between UN Women and ILO, the analysis focuses on mothers and fathers (women and men aged 25 to 54 with partners and at least one child under the age of 6 at home) that actively participate in the labour market. Even before the pandemic, labour force participation for mothers (55% for women aged 25-54 with partners and at least one child under the age of 6 at home) was lagging behind women's overall participation rate (62.1%) and was substantially lower than that of fathers (97.1%).

Working fathers, in fact, enjoy a labour market premium – they are more likely to participate in the workforce than all men in the same age group (whose participation rate is 93.5%). The data confirm that the unequal division of care and domestic responsibilities inside the home a strong driver of inequalities in labour market participation, absence of women's access to social protection and equal pay, growth in wages and immediate and long-term opportunities for management and leadership positions, exposure to the risk of violence and harassment.

*In 2020, the pressures of juggling work and family, coupled with school closures and job losses in female-dominated sectors meant even fewer women were participating in the workforce. About 113 million women aged 25–54 with partners and small children were out of the workforce in 2020. This figure is astonishing, particularly when compared to their male peers (13 million of whom were out of the workforce – up from 8 million before COVID-19). It also speaks to a dramatic reversal induced by the pandemic of what had previously been a slow but steady upward trend in labour market participation rates of women with partners and small children. The decline in women's participation rates is observed across regions, irrespective of pre-pandemic levels. Latin America and the Caribbean in particular saw a precipitous fall, from 56.4% in 2019 to 51.5% in 2020 (a 4.9 percentage-point decrease compared to 2.7 percentage points for men). For many women, care pressures forced them to leave the workforce altogether, or to reduce their working hours, while others switched jobs in favour of work offering more flexibility and shorter commutes. These shifts may have severe consequences for women's short-term and long-term income security. On other side, access to flexible work arrangements, such as work-from-home, along with other care policies including extended family leave for parents, sick leave and childcare services for frontline workers, explain why working moms fared better in some regions compared to others.

*In 2022, women continue to face the same pressures as in 2020. New and more contagious strains of the virus causing schools and related care, nutrition and health services, to frequently close or remain inaccessible and women are again feeling the squeeze having massive impact on women's mental health. Based on data from Rapid Gender Assessments by UN Women, in 22 out of 33 countries surveyed, women were more likely than men to report that their mental or emotional well-being had been impaired. And women who reported increased unpaid care and domestic work were 1.6 times as likely to report increased mental and emotional stress as women who did not see increases in such work.

*The worsening situation for young people due to the COVID-19 crisis is particularly worrisome for young women. Almost a third of female youth worldwide were already not in education, employment or training in 2019. Lockdown measures threaten the livelihoods of informal economy workers, with women overrepresented in high-risk sectors. An estimated 1.6 billion informal economy workers – that is, 76 per cent of informal workers globally – were significantly impacted by the lockdown measures and/or working in the hardest-hit sectors such as accommodation and food services with 42 per cent of

women workers were working in those sectors, compared to 32 per cent of men. This caused sudden income losses and heightened risks of falling into poverty and gender inequalities.

*The estimates of the impact of COVID-19 on the world of work published by the ILO highlights total loss in working time of 17.3% between the fourth quarter of 2019 and the second quarter of 2020, or 495 full-time equivalent jobs globally. The pandemic has had an even greater impact on the work of women than men due to the fact that women are more commonly employed in sectors and occupations which are at greater risk of loss. Women also account for a large proportion of front-line workers, and are simultaneously feeling the effects of an increased burden of unpaid care work with school closures, illness of family members etc.

*Preliminary data shows that in most countries more men dying of the disease than women. But some groups of women are particularly vulnerable during this crisis. Women paid care workers as 70% of the global health care workforce; women are in close contact with patients, thus facing a higher risk of infection. Globally, women on average do three times as much unpaid care and domestic work. Widespread job losses will have long-term impacts for women's economic independence and security. With 740 million women globally in informal employment, women are particularly hard hit by the crisis. Lockdowns and restrictions adversely affected women's access to services worsening their vulnerability.

So, the impacts of crises are never gender-neutral, and COVID-19 is no exception.

3-Reasons of why economic crises hit women harder are:

1. Women tend to earn less
2. Women have fewer savings
3. Women are disproportionately more in the informal economy
4. Women have less access to social protections
5. Women are more likely to be burdened with unpaid care and domestic work, and therefore have to drop out of the labour force
6. Women make up the majority of single-parent households

4-Measures to reduce the negative impacts of COVID-19:

1. Direct income support to women

Introduce economic support packages, including direct cash-transfers, expanded unemployment benefits, tax breaks, and expanded family and child benefits for vulnerable women and their families.

2. Support for women-owned and -led businesses

Businesses owned and led by women should receive specific grants and stimulus funding, as well as subsidized and state-backed loans. Tax burdens should be eased and where possible, governments should source food, personal protection equipment, and other essential supplies

3. Support for women workers

Implement gender-responsive social protection systems to support income security for women. For instance, affordable and quality childcare services, bridging the gender pay gap, enact laws and policies that guarantee equal pay for work of equal value & etc.

4. Support for informal workers

Provide social protection and benefits to informal workers. For informal workers left unemployed, cash transfers or unemployment compensation, deferring or exempting taxes and social security payments for workers in the informal sector.

5. Reconciliation of paid and unpaid work

Provide all primary caregivers with paid leave and reduced or

flexible working arrangements and childcare services and public campaigns to promote equitable distribution of care and domestic work between men and women.

And also include:

1. Family-friendly working arrangements for both parents, including telework, flexible start and finish times, time-banking and the ability to work compressed work weeks
2. Access to affordable and quality childcare, education and school meal services, with good quality care jobs
3. More inclusive and adequate paid leave provisions, including parental, sick, emergency and long-term care leave
4. Promoting work environments free from violence and harassment
5. Preventing and addressing discrimination based on motherhood, including by removing legal barriers for women entering, remaining and progressing in the workforce
6. Promoting women's participation in managerial and leadership positions
7. Introducing labour laws/reforms that promote decent work for all.

5-Conclusion:

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought into sharp focus the existence of many inequalities in the world of work, including disparities in women and men's engagement in paid and unpaid work. These inequalities are further widened by the crisis, but the data required to understand and monitor these trends are scarcely available for varying reasons. For making policy data should be proper. But data gaps persist across all domains. Data gaps has worsened in the short term with many surveys being postponed, cancelled or facing major operational difficulties. Many countries do not have up to date estimates of employment and unemployment, Concerted and substantial efforts will be needed to try and fill data gaps as well measures to mitigate the problems of women workers which will be even more challenging in a time of crisis. One important action that can be taken is the implementation of the latest statistical standards by all govts notably those adopted at the 19th ICLS in October 2013 and making provision in the budget to address the issues of women workers.

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