



## SUMMARY

While there has been great progress in recent decades in engaging women in the labour force, there has been considerably less advance on improving the conditions under which they work, recognizing their unpaid work, eliminating discriminatory practices and laws related to property and inheritance rights, and providing support for childcare. Ensuring that women and men have equal opportunities to generate and manage income is an important step towards realizing women's rights. Moreover, children's rights are more likely to be fulfilled when women fully enjoy their social and economic rights.

- For many women, unpaid work in and for the household takes up the majority of their working hours, with much less time spent in remunerative employment. Even when they participate in the labour market for paid employment, women still undertake the majority of the housework.
- When women work outside the household, they earn, on average, far

less than men. They are also more likely to work in more precarious forms of employment with low earnings, little financial security and few or no social benefits.

- Women not only earn less than men but also tend to own fewer assets. Smaller salaries and less control over household income constrain their ability to accumulate capital. Gender biases in property and inheritance laws and in other channels of acquiring assets also leave women and children at greater risk of poverty.
- Paid employment for women does not automatically lead to better outcomes for children. Factors such as the amount of time women spend working outside the household, the conditions under which they are employed and who controls the income they generate determine how the work undertaken by women in the labour market affects their own well-being and that of children.

- In many countries, high-quality childcare remains prohibitively expensive for low-income families in the absence of state provision or subsidies. Parents often rely on extended family members or older children – most often girls – to provide childcare while they work, often at the expense of children's education.
- Challenging attitudes towards women at work requires a multifaceted approach. Governments should undertake legislative, financial and administrative measures to create a strong and enabling environment for women's entrepreneurship and participation in the labour market. Social policies should be promoted to tackle discrimination in the workplace and to enable women and men to reconcile their work and family responsibilities. For children, the most important strategies for ensuring that girls and boys will have equal income-earning opportunities as adults is to give them equal access to education.

# Equality in employment

**T**he story of women's economic empowerment is an account of great potential, all too often unfulfilled. It is not that women do not work – they often work longer hours than men – but they almost invariably earn less income as a result of their labours and own less property. While there has been progress in recent decades in engaging women in the global labour force, there has been considerably less advance on improving the conditions under which they work, recognizing their unpaid work, eliminating discriminatory practices and laws related to property and inheritance rights and providing childcare support.

Ensuring that women and men have equal opportunities to generate and manage income is an important step towards realizing women's rights under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and enhancing their development, self-esteem and influence both within the household and in society. Furthermore, children's rights are more likely to be realized when women fully enjoy their social and economic rights.

Policymakers are becoming attuned to the reality that women have an important economic role in addressing the poverty experienced by children; an increasing number of countries are channelling provisions to fulfil children's rights – such as cash transfers contingent on sending children to school – directly to mothers. Across the world, the livelihoods of households are already often sustained and enhanced by women who work outside the home – from those who cultivate subsistence crops or work on large farms where they oversee the output and marketing

of produce, to those labouring in factories and offices. In both the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa, for example, women produce about 80 per cent of household food consumed.<sup>1</sup>

## Women are working more but earning less than men

Whether they live in industrialized or developing countries, in rural or urban settings, in general, women work longer hours than men. While data on the way men and women use their time are sparse, surveys conducted in recent years confirm the validity of this assertion across developing countries. Oxfam estimates that women work around 60 to 90 hours per week,<sup>2</sup> and time-use surveys reveal that across a selection of developing countries in Asia, Latin America and sub-Saharan Africa, women's working hours exceed those of men, often by a wide margin<sup>3</sup> (see *Figure 3.1, page 38*).

For many women, unpaid chores in and for the household take up the majority of their working hours, with much less time spent in remunerative employment. Data from urban areas in 15 Latin American countries reveal that unpaid household work is the principal activity for 1 in every 4 women; the corresponding ratio for men is 1 in every 200.<sup>4</sup>

Even when they participate in the labour market for paid employment, women still undertake the majority of work in the home. Here again, this finding is substantiated by research in countries across developing regions. In Mexico, for example, women in paid employment also perform household tasks that absorb 33 hours of their time each week; in contrast, men's contribution to domestic chores amounts to just 6 hours per week.<sup>5</sup>



© UNICEF/HQ05-1679/Josh Estey

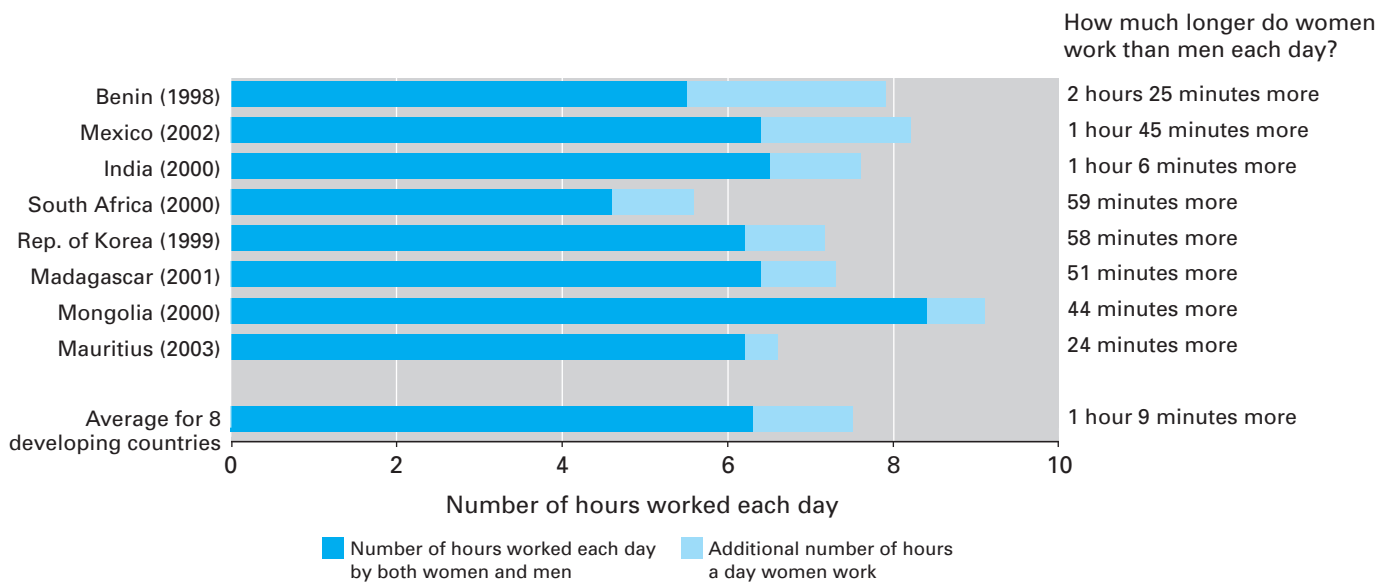
Time-use surveys in six states in India reveal that women typically spend 35 hours per week on household tasks and caring for children, the sick and elderly, against 4 hours per week for men.<sup>6</sup>

The division of household labour is not dissimilar in industrialized countries. Although

gender disparities in the overall work burden are less marked than in developing countries, women in the more affluent nations still spend a far greater proportion of working hours than men in unpaid work.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the limited time that many women spend in paid employment and their pivotal

**Figure 3.1 Women are working longer hours than men across the developing world\***



\*It is important to note that the data represent averages across each country that reflect high levels of underemployment. In some settings, women are working more than 12 hours a day.

Source: UNICEF calculations based on data derived from United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2006, Beyond Scarcity: Power, poverty and the global water crisis*, Oxford University Press for UNDP, New York, 2006, page 379.

contribution to the functioning of the household, there is a widespread view that women as well as men should contribute to household income. Findings from the World Values Survey reveal that when asked whether husbands and wives should both contribute to household income, a clear majority of respondents agreed – around 90 per cent on average in countries surveyed in East Asia and Pacific, Latin America, sub-Saharan Africa and transition economies, and more than two thirds in the Middle East and South Asia.<sup>8</sup>

These attitudes have, perhaps, contributed to the steady increase in women entering the labour force over the past two decades. By 2005, women accounted for roughly 40 per cent of the world's economically active population.<sup>9</sup> Trends in participation rates vary widely across regions, however, with much greater female economic activity rates in East Asia and Pacific (68.9 per cent), sub-Saharan Africa (62.3 per cent) and CEE/CIS (57.5 per cent) than elsewhere. Just over one third of women in the Arab States, and under one half in Latin America and South Asia are economically active.<sup>10</sup>

A more revealing statistic of the regional variation in women's relative economic activity

outside the household is the gender parity activity index (defined here as the female economic activity rate as a percentage of the male rate). In the least developed countries, CEE/CIS, East Asia and Pacific, sub-Saharan Africa and the member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the parity index exceeds 70 per cent. However, it drops to 52 per cent in Latin America and South Asia and below 50 per cent in the Arab States.<sup>11</sup>

### The wage and earnings gap

Women not only spend significantly less time in paid employment than men; when they work outside the household their average income is also far lower. Although disaggregated data on nominal wages are scarce, the available evidence shows that, across regions, women's nominal wages are roughly 20 per cent lower than men's. While the data show that gender wage gaps exist across countries, these can vary significantly and can even be inverted. In Brazil, for example, women under the age of 25 earn a higher average hourly wage than their male counterparts.<sup>12</sup>

Because much of the work women do is underpaid and because they often perform low-status jobs and earn less than men,



© UNICEF/HQ06:1263/Roger LeVoyne

women's per capita average earned income – measured by applying women's share of non-agricultural wages to gross domestic product – is far lower than men's (see Figure 3.3, page 41). Estimates based on wage differentials and participation in the labour force suggest that women's estimated earned income is around 30 per cent of men's in the countries surveyed in the Middle East and North Africa, around 40 per cent in Latin America and South Asia, 50 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and around 60 per cent in CEE/CIS, East Asia and industrialized countries.<sup>13</sup> As Chapter 2 shows, income in the hands of women can reap benefits for children. Gender gaps in earnings, therefore, can decrease or limit the resources available to meet children's rights, such as health care, adequate nutrition and education.

With both parents working outside the home, and in the absence of adequate social support systems, children's rights to education, rest and leisure, care and protection are also at risk. One example of this negative externality is the mother-daughter substitute effect. As mothers take on paid work outside the home, children, especially girls, assume the domestic responsibilities, looking after the home and

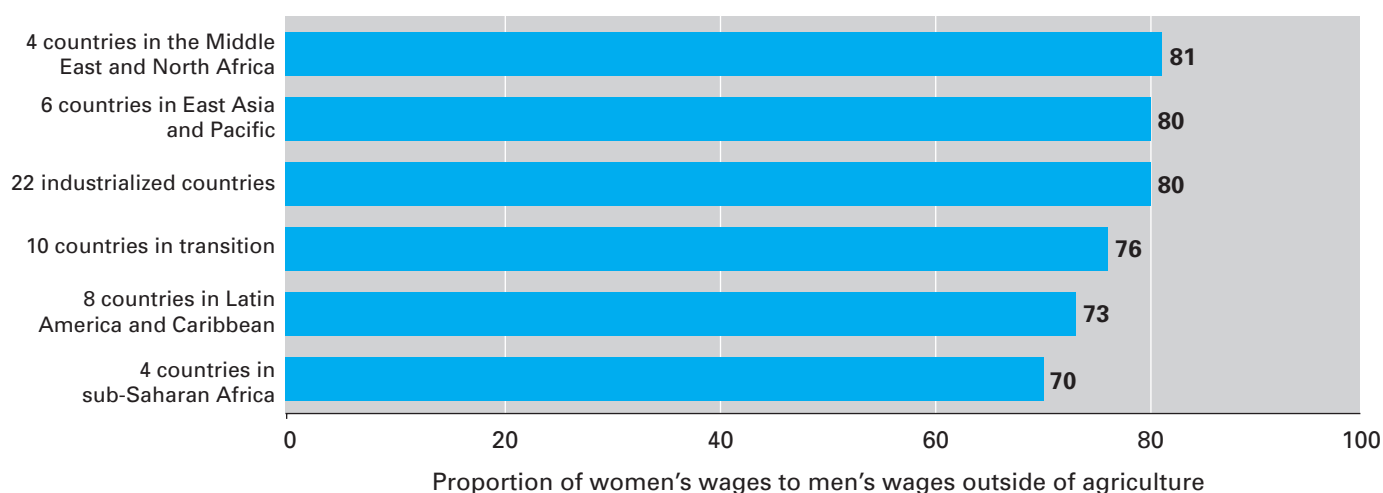
taking care of siblings – often at the expense of their education.<sup>14</sup> This highlights the importance of the role played by both parents in caring for children, whether or not they work outside the home (see Panel, page 41).

### The asset gap

Women not only earn less than men, they also tend to own fewer assets. Smaller salaries and less control over household income constrain their ability to accumulate capital. But these are not the only reasons. Gender biases in property and inheritance laws and in other channels of acquiring assets – even state land distribution programmes – leave women and children at greater risk of poverty.<sup>15</sup>

The consequences of being excluded from owning property or assets can be even more direct, particularly when a marriage breaks down or a husband dies. Widows who upon their husband's death lose the right to their ownership of the family home or land, or divorced women who are driven from the husband's home, are easily pushed into the margins of society, further exacerbating the struggle to achieve health and well-being for themselves and their children.<sup>16</sup>

**Figure 3.2 Nominal wages for women are significantly lower than for men\***



\* UNICEF calculations for **Developing countries** include countries and territories in the following regional groups. *Middle East and North Africa*: Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Occupied Palestinian Territory. *East Asia and Pacific*: Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Thailand. *Countries in transition*: Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Turkey, Ukraine. *Latin America and Caribbean*: Brazil, Colombia, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru. *Sub-Saharan Africa*: Botswana, Eritrea, Kenya, Swaziland.

**Industrialized countries**: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Japan, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

**Source**: International Labour Organization, LABORSTA database, <<http://laborsta.ilo.org>>, accessed March 2006.

## Do girls risk missing out on school when women work?

Although increasing numbers of women are entering the workforce, their expanded participation is not always matched by an improvement in children's welfare. The need for substitute caregivers while mothers are at work places many children – most often girls – at risk of being kept out of or dropping out of school in order to care for younger siblings or perform household work, or both. The universally recognized rights of children to play, to receive an education and to be cared for by both parents are at risk, with negative implications for their well-being and future economic status. Evidence of these trends is consistent across many developing countries.

A recent survey in Nepal shows that eldest daughters tend to be at greatest risk of being withdrawn from school to help their working mothers take care of younger siblings and to assume household responsibilities. Evidence from the United Republic of Tanzania indicates that a lack of childcare facilities forces parents to take their children to work or pass on childcare responsibilities to their elder siblings. Increasing female employment in Peru has resulted in children, particularly girls, dedicating more time to household activities. Similarly, in countries in South-East Asia, as more mothers work outside the home, the

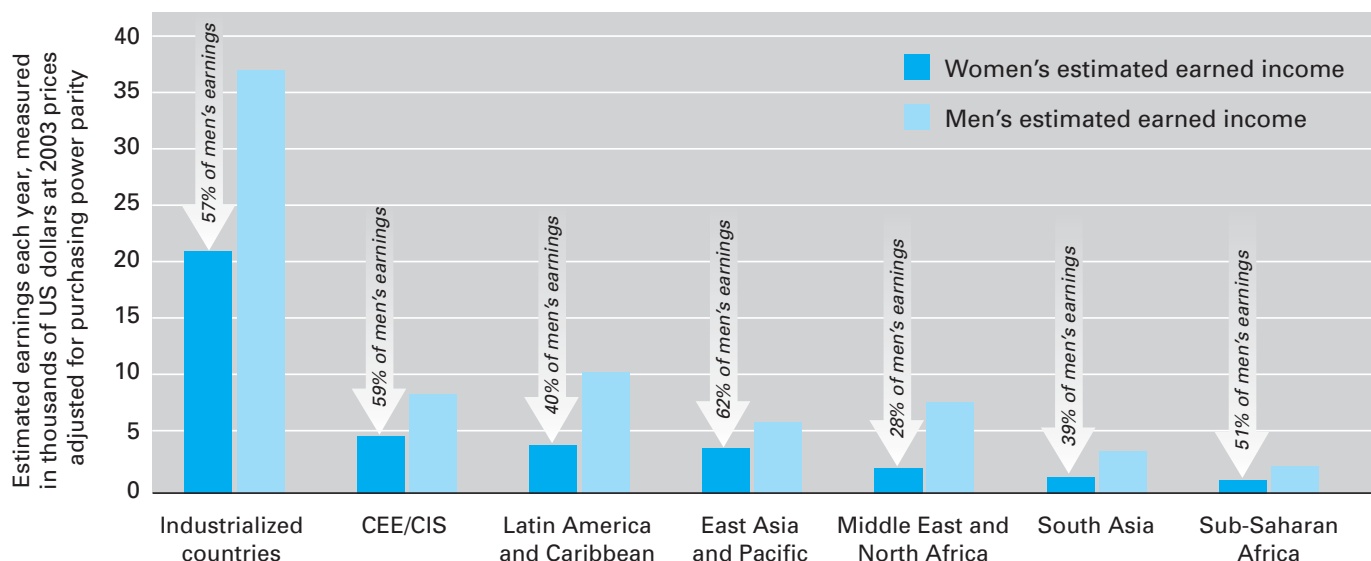
increased need for childcare is met by older children, aunts and grandmothers, who often become the primary caregivers of young children in rural areas.

*See References, page 88.*

Although there are even fewer statistics on gender asset gaps than on wage disparities, the evidence available suggests that the pattern of discrimination is broadly similar across the developing world. A study covering five Latin

American countries indicates that women own only a fraction of the land compared with men (see Figure 3.4, page 42).<sup>17</sup> In other regions where data are available, women face similar inequalities. For example, in Cameroon, while

**Figure 3.3** Estimated earnings\* for women are substantially lower than for men



\*Estimated earnings are defined as gross domestic product per capita (measured in US dollars at 2003 prices adjusted for purchasing power parity) adjusted for wage disparities between men and women.

**Source:** United Nations Development Programme, *Human Development Report 2005: International cooperation at a cross roads: Aid, trade and security in an unequal world*, Oxford University Press for UNDP, New York, 2005, Table 25, pages 299-302.

women undertake more than 75 per cent of agricultural work they own less than 10 per cent of the land. Comparable disparities have been identified in Kenya, Nigeria, the United Republic of Tanzania and other countries in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>18</sup> In Pakistan, research reveals that women owned less than 3 per cent of plots in sampled villages, despite having the right to inherit land in most villages.<sup>19</sup>

Where women own assets they have more control over household decision-making. For example, in rural Bangladeshi households, when women's shares of pre-wedding assets are higher than their husbands', their influence in household decisions is greater and levels of sickness among their daughters decrease.<sup>20</sup>

The benefits of ownership can also extend beyond household bargaining dynamics, with positive implications for productivity and growth, particularly in agriculture. Giving women greater control over land and farm planning and management can enhance agricultural productivity. A study by the International Food Policy Research Institute suggests that if gender inequalities were reduced in Burkina Faso, and men and women farmers given equal access to quality agricultural inputs and education, agricultural pro-

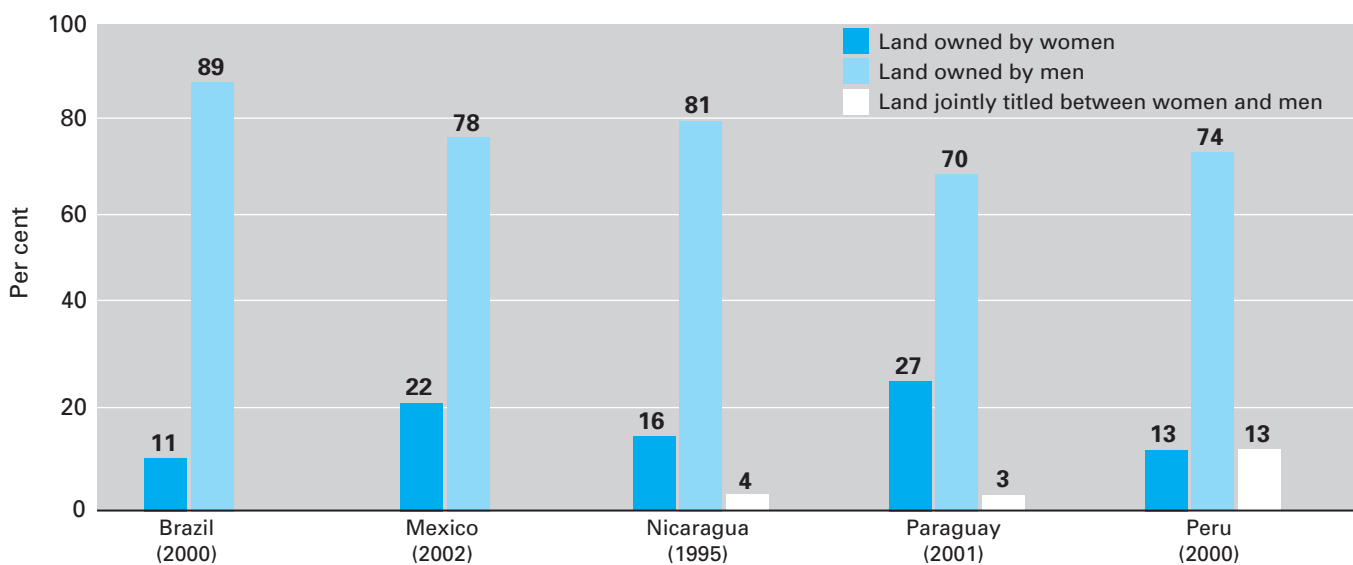
ductivity could rise by as much as 20 per cent.<sup>21</sup> An earlier study on women farmers in Kenya revealed that crop yields could be increased by 24 per cent if all women farmers were to receive a primary education.<sup>22</sup> Another study in Bangladesh reached a similar conclusion, showing that providing women with specific resources such as high-yielding vegetable seeds and polyculture fish technology in fish ponds leased to groups of low-income women has a greater impact on poverty reduction than untargeted technology dissemination, which is more likely to benefit men and more affluent households.<sup>23</sup>

Empowering women through other types of investment can also have positive effects on economic growth and poverty reduction. Research indicates that providing women with skills training and access to new technologies gives them greater mobility and increases their control over resources, enhances their political awareness and reduces instances of domestic violence.<sup>24</sup>

### Where women work matters for children

Female participation in the workforce can be beneficial to children, because it often results

**Figure 3.4 Significant male-female gaps in land ownership in Latin America**



**Note:** No data were available for land jointly titled between women and men in Brazil and Mexico. Totals may not add up to 100 per cent due to rounding.

**Source:** Grown, Caren, Geeta Rao Gupta and Aslihan Kes, *Taking Action: Achieving gender equality and empowering women*, UN Millennium Project Taskforce on Education and Gender Equality, Earthscan, London/Virginia, 2005, page 78.



© UNICEF/HQ05-1213/Roger LeMoigne

in women gaining greater access to, and control of, economic resources. But paid employment for women does not automatically lead to better outcomes for children. Factors such as the amount of time women spend working outside the household, the conditions under which they are employed and who controls the income they generate determine how their employment affects their own well-being and that of their children.

### Women's informal employment and its impact on children

The increased participation of women in the labour force has not always been matched by an equivalent improvement in their working conditions or job security. Women are less likely than men to enjoy job security, working in positions with low earnings, little financial security and few or no social benefits. As growing numbers of women join the labour force, there has been a parallel increase in informal and non-standard forms of employment. In developing countries, the majority of women workers outside agriculture are concentrated in the informal sector. They are more likely than men to be own-account workers, domestic workers, industrial outworkers or unpaid workers in family enterprises.<sup>25</sup>

By its very nature, informal work is less visible in national statistics due to the lack of system-

atic reporting. Collecting accurate and comprehensive information on the informal sector remains problematic because of the wide-ranging nature of activities, non-formal organizational structures and diverse modes of operation involved.<sup>26</sup>

In nearly all developing regions, 60 per cent or more of women engaged in non-agricultural work activities are in informal employment. The exception is North Africa, where women's participation in the informal sector is 43 per cent. Of the developing regions, sub-Saharan Africa has the highest rate of informally employed women (84 per cent).<sup>27</sup> Individual developing countries show wide variation across regions (see *Figure 3.5, page 44*).

Women working in the informal sector often face difficult working conditions, long hours and unscheduled overtime. The lack of job security and benefits such as paid sick leave and childcare provisions can leave women and their children at a higher risk of poverty.<sup>28</sup> When mothers are poor, engaged in time-intensive, underpaid and inflexible informal work, and have little control over their earnings and few alternative caregivers, children are significantly more at risk of poor health and growth.<sup>29</sup>

Such conditions are prevalent in many areas of both informal employment and low-income

work in the formal sector. One particular area that has received increasing scrutiny in recent years is domestic service. Women make up the majority of domestic workers, most of them informally employed. When mothers who work in domestic service take on childcare responsibilities for the employer's family, this often results in a conundrum: The day-to-day security of the employer's children is dependent on an employee who has to be away from her own children in order to work.<sup>30</sup>

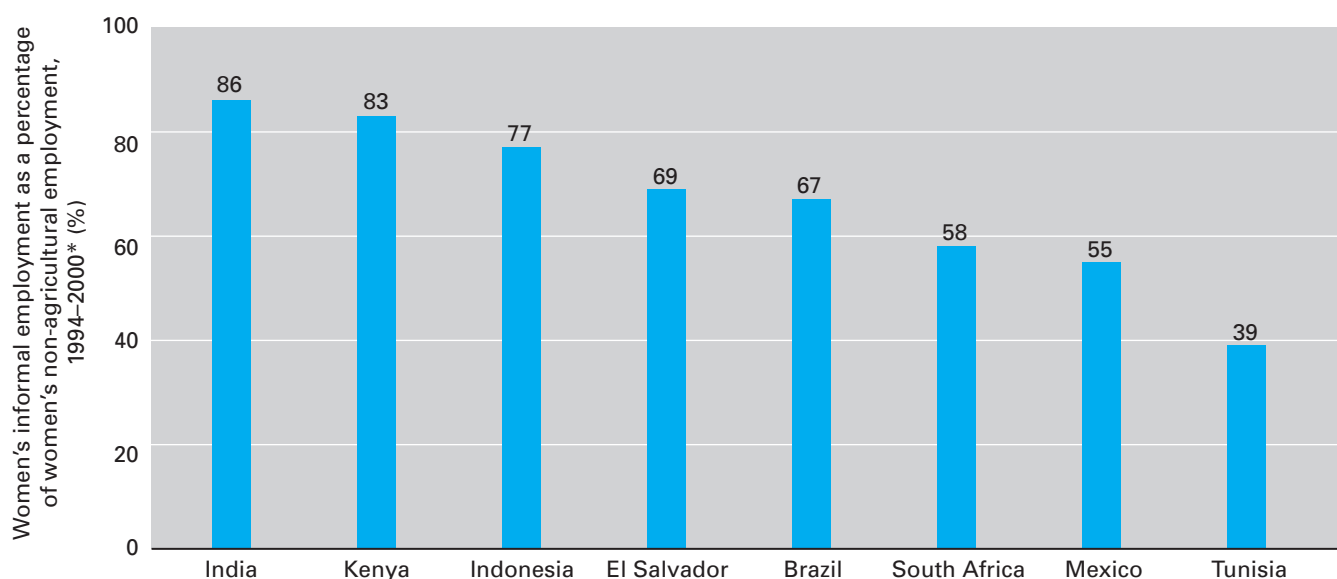
### A childcare crisis in the formal sector

The increasing participation of women in the labour force is challenging the traditional breadwinner-homemaker model of paid work by men and unpaid work by women. In its place, a new model is prevalent in many countries, such as the high-income OECD countries, transition economies and the rapidly growing nations of East Asia, where both men and women engage in paid employment.<sup>31</sup> In the United Kingdom and the United States, for example, two out of every three families are currently double-income families.<sup>32</sup> In the Russian Federation, in 52 per cent of households in which there are young children, all adults between the ages of 25 and 55 are working. The corresponding figure for Viet Nam is 88 per cent.<sup>33</sup>

But even as this new model of household income generation steadily takes root, in general women are still expected to take on the majority of the housework and childcare. As a result, and in the absence of greater participation by men in both domestic chores and childcare, it is becoming increasingly difficult for working mothers to reconcile work and family responsibilities.<sup>34</sup>

Women working in the formal sector are more likely to have shorter careers than men of equivalent age because there may be periods during their careers when they are unable to engage in full-time employment. Many women in high- and middle-income countries tend either to leave their jobs or work part-time to raise children – typically between the ages of 25 and 35 – and return to full-time employment at a later stage.<sup>35</sup> In the European Union, around half of working mothers with a child aged six or younger work part-time.<sup>36</sup> These temporary absences from full-time employment can result in lower pay or fewer promotions. In addition, positions that require long working hours, travel or even relocation may be less of an option for mothers in paid employment because of their family commitments.<sup>37</sup>

**Figure 3.5 Many women across the developing world work in the informal sector**



\* Data refer to the most recent year available during the period specified.

Source: Employment Sector, International Labour Office, *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A statistical picture*, International Labour Organization, Geneva, 2002, page 19.

In the absence of policies to support working mothers, childbearing and childcare can interrupt women's careers and permanently constrain their earning power. Research indicates that mothers in paid employment tend to earn even less than other women. According to recent research in several industrialized countries, one child could lead to a 'penalty' of 6 per cent to 7 per cent of earnings for women; the penalty for two children can be as high as 13 per cent.<sup>38</sup>

Although research shows that quality parental care is an essential component of child development and that the early experiences of children have a significant impact on their future welfare,<sup>39</sup> working families are often struggling to balance the demands of work and childcare.

The demands of work also often leave parents with less time to spend with their children. A study from the United Kingdom shows that parents there are working longer hours or are increasingly focused on work activities.<sup>40</sup> Working long hours can be problematic for lower-income families, yet many employers do not regard work-schedule flexibility to be an option for low-wage workers.<sup>41</sup> More than two thirds of the low-income parents interviewed in a recent study in the United States reported having at least one child with either a chronic health issue or a special learning need, and that they were often unable to devote quality time to their children without jeopardizing their ability to support their families.<sup>42</sup>

These difficulties are exacerbated by a lack of affordable, quality, childcare facilities. Children who receive high-quality childcare that provides a safe, stable and stimulating environment and fosters their learning skills demonstrate stronger mathematical ability, cognitive skills and alertness and exhibit fewer behavioural problems than children who receive low-quality care.<sup>43</sup>

In many countries, the absence of state provisions or subsidies results in high-quality childcare remaining prohibitively expensive for low-income families. In others, quality childcare is expensive even for middle-income families.<sup>44</sup> Parents often rely on extended family members to care for their children while they work. Studies conducted in China and in West

Java, Indonesia, for example, show that grandmothers, in particular, play an active role in childcare when mothers are away at work.<sup>45</sup>

The availability of affordable, quality childcare outside the home increases the probability that mothers will enter the labour force. In poor areas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, access to public childcare facilities enables mothers to work outside the home, in full- or part-time employment. This also holds true for the Russian Federation, where subsidized out-of-home childcare raises maternal and household incomes and brings mothers into the labour market. In Kenya, the reduction of childcare costs has been shown to have a positive correlation with higher wages for working mothers.<sup>46</sup>

Some countries – notably those Scandinavian nations with high levels of gender equality as measured by the GEM (*see Chapter 1, page 8*) – have managed to attain and sustain elevated levels of high-quality, affordable childcare. One example is Sweden, where municipalities provide public childcare nurseries and centres, as well as publicly paid and regulated care for children in private homes and subsidized private childcare centres with fees based on income.<sup>47</sup> In the Netherlands, the Childcare Act (which entered into force in January 2005) places responsibility for the cost of childcare jointly on parents, employers and the government. The government provides subsidies directly to parents, who choose the day-care centre for their children. Employers are required to contribute one sixth of the cost of childcare per employee, while the local government monitors quality and regulates operators.<sup>48</sup>

In many industrialized countries, large companies have introduced family-friendly initiatives including parental leave, maternity benefits, career breaks, flexible hours, childcare arrangements and work-share schemes (*see Panel, page 46*).<sup>49</sup> Such initiatives can have substantial benefits for employers as well as employees. Working parents and employers agree that work-schedule flexibility reduces the conflict between work and family life, giving parents the opportunity to attend to their children's health and educational needs.<sup>50</sup>

## The impact on children of women migrating for work

Around the world there are between 185 million and 192 million migrants living outside their country of birth, of whom roughly half

are women.<sup>51</sup> While women's migration could potentially be beneficial, it also engenders new vulnerabilities for individuals and families.<sup>52</sup> One such risk is separation, as migration sometimes forces parents to leave their chil-

## The impact of family-friendly workplaces in industrialized countries

Following the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo, and the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing the following year, the ensuing decade saw the launch of many family-related initiatives focusing on gender equality and work-family reconciliation. The rationale for this increasing interest was the recognition that dual-working parents require special support and that, in the absence of such support, gender equality in the workplace cannot be achieved. In several industrialized countries, state and private support for working families, in particular for working women with young children, are composed of a broad range of initiatives. These include flexible working hours, telecommuting or working at home, parental leave, medical care for sick children and childcare provisions. In the absence of childcare provisions, part-time work may also help reconcile work and family life.

Some companies have begun implementing family-friendly initiatives. In Australia, in addition to flexible working hours, 35 per cent of labour agreements in large firms and 8 per cent in small firms include at least one family-friendly policy. BMW, the German automobile manufacturer, allocates funds for the family-related needs of its employees, such as purchase of baby carriages, children's clothing or hearing aids for elderly relatives. The company also provides facilities and financial support for childcare.

Family-friendly initiatives can be beneficial to both businesses and employees. Research conducted in Canada, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom shows that companies that have introduced family-friendly measures experience significant reductions in staff turnover, recruitment and training costs and absenteeism, and have increased the likelihood that mothers return to work after maternity leave. It is estimated that companies can generate a return of around 8 per cent by adopting family-friendly policies. AMP, a leading Australian wealth-management corporation, estimates that making its workplace more family-friendly has achieved as much as a 400 per cent return on investment, mainly through increasing staff return after maternity leave. However, further research shows that family-friendly policies are more likely to offer parental leave or childcare subsidies, or both, to highly paid employees rather than those with lower salaries. Such policies are particularly needed by low-wage working mothers who struggle with poor working conditions, low compensation and a lack of childcare facilities.

Family-friendly provisions are by no means uniform across industrialized countries. While in some countries parents may take up to three years of leave with some financial compensation, in others paid leave is restricted to the periods immediately before and after childbirth. In Scandinavian countries, employ-

ment-protected leave with relatively high compensation rates is an integral part of a family-friendly policy model. In Sweden, for example, working families are allowed 12 months of paid parental leave, to be divided between parents as they desire, provided that only one parent is on leave at any given time. Aided by the right to reduce their working hours until children go to school, almost half the mothers in dual-earner families in Sweden work less than 35 hours per week. Yet, while some countries encourage fathers to take temporary leave to care for their newborns, most countries continue to accept a traditional gender division of labour in which women stay at home, out of the labour force.

The lack of systematic reporting hampers measurement of the effectiveness of family-friendly policies (i.e., how well they achieve a balance between work and family life). While seemingly positive, two challenges remain even in the presence of family-friendly workplaces. First, working mothers continue to be the primary caregivers for their children, experience career interruptions and suffer from the double burden of working within and outside the household throughout their lives. Second, the family-friendly policy model frequently excludes low-skilled and low-wage workers, working mothers in particular, and typically benefits higher-paid workers.

*See References, page 88.*

dren behind. In the Philippines, for example, an estimated 3 million to 6 million children (10 per cent to 20 per cent of all under-18s) have been left by parents working overseas.<sup>53</sup>

Evidence from the Philippines, along with research on Indonesia and Thailand, suggests that, compared with non-migrants, the children of migrants might not be a particularly disadvantaged group in terms of income or access to basic services such as health care and education. This is because migration is generally an effective way for households to alleviate poverty, and because extended families help fill the gap left by absent parents.<sup>54</sup> Remittances sent by parents who have migrated are often an important source of income for the families left behind.<sup>55</sup>

Migration may improve women's self-esteem and status as they are able to assume a key role as providers by sending remittances home to their families and communities.<sup>56</sup> Several academic studies have found an increase in school attendance and an improvement in children's access to health-care services in households with parents working abroad.<sup>57</sup>

Although remittances sent by migrant workers can bolster household income, the migration of one or both parents can have negative effects on children, jeopardizing their development and well-being.<sup>58</sup> Research from Ecuador, Mexico and the Philippines suggests that children whose parents have migrated can suffer negative psychological effects.<sup>59</sup> In the Philippines, the children of migrant mothers reported feeling angry, lonely and afraid.<sup>60</sup> In other countries, the risks of abuse and trafficking increase when relatives and friends gain custody of children left behind – risks particularly emphasized in studies conducted in Albania and the Republic of Moldova.<sup>61</sup>

'Involuntary migration' also poses especially high risks to children. Refugee and internally displaced children face particular threats.<sup>62</sup> They may be separated from their families, lose their homes and find themselves living in poor conditions with grave risks to their health and education.<sup>63</sup>

Migrant women and girls are uniquely vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. With a greater likelihood of entering into low-status jobs, such as domestic service, migrant women often face human rights violations.<sup>64</sup> An International Labour Organization study reports that half of foreign female domestic workers interviewed said they were or had been victims of verbal, physical or sexual abuse.<sup>65</sup> When migrants have children in foreign countries they may also face discrimination in passing their nationality on to their children, or, if they are undocumented, may be reluctant to register their children for fear of deportation.<sup>66</sup>

A number of countries have made positive efforts to address migration and its effects on women and their families. In 2003, the Jordanian Government endorsed the Special Unified Working Contract for non-Jordanian domestic workers. The Philippines and Sri Lanka require that departing workers register with the government. Italy's immigration law provides a number of protections for migrants and their families.<sup>67</sup> However, while migration is moving up the development agenda, the significant implications for children still receive little focus and research.

## **Challenging attitudes towards women and work**

The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women guarantees women's equality before the law and establishes specific measures to eradicate discrimination against women in all areas of their lives, including those related to education, health, employment, marriage and the family.<sup>68</sup> While all but a handful of countries have endorsed CEDAW – albeit some with reservations – much more can be done to ensure discrimination does not exclude women from opportunities to work productively.

The workplace must be transformed to recognize the role that both parents play in child rearing, as required by article 18 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Social policies and programmes should be promoted to enable women and men to reconcile their work and

family responsibilities and encourage men to take on an equal share of domestic chores and childcare.<sup>69</sup> It is also important to implement policies aimed at altering stereotypical attitudes towards women at work, addressing underlying factors including sectoral and occupational segregation, and lack of education and training.<sup>70</sup> Chapter 5 addresses the concrete actions and initiatives required to help eradicate gender discrimination in employment. A brief synopsis of some of these measures is presented below.

**The vital role of education:** One of the most important strategies for ensuring that boys and girls will have equal income-earning opportunities as adults is to give them equal access to education. Several strategies have proved to be effective in increasing girls' school enrolment in primary and secondary school, including the elimination of school fees. However, eliminating school fees is only one of several measures required to ensure gender parity in education. Governments, parents and inter-

## Child labour: Are girls affected differently from boys?

Gender is a crucial determinant of whether a child engages in labour. While child labour is an infringement of the rights of all children – boys and girls alike – girls often start working at an earlier age than boys, especially in the rural areas where most working children are found. Girls also tend to do more work in the home than boys. As a result of adherence to traditional gender roles, many girls are denied their right to an education or may suffer the triple burden of housework, schoolwork and work outside the home, paid or unpaid.

In the Dominican Republic, for example, girls are expected to care for their siblings as well as complete household tasks. As a result, almost twice as many girls as boys perform domestic chores. In Egypt, girls are expected to do the majority of work in the home. Parents are often reluctant to send their girl children to school because educating them is not viewed as a good investment as they will soon marry and leave home.

Paid domestic service is often seen as a particularly suitable form of employment for girls. Research indicates that worldwide, domestic service is the main economic activity for

girls younger than 16, with more girls employed in this sector than in any other form of work. The majority of the children engaged in domestic service – over 90 per cent according to studies conducted in the 1990s – are girls. This is particularly true in Latin America. In Guatemala, for example, while twice as many boys as girls are engaged in child labour, more than 90 per cent of child domestic workers are girls. In some countries, the situation is reversed; in Nepal, for example, the majority of child domestic workers are boys.

In many countries in East and South-East Asia, parents send their daughters to work in domestic service because they see it as good preparation for marriage. In India, young girls will often accompany their mothers as they undertake domestic work and, at ages eight or nine, be hired as domestic workers themselves. In Ghana, where girls are traditionally seen as homemakers, many mothers encourage their daughters to start working as domestics.

Domestic work is among the least regulated of all occupations. Working in the privacy of individual homes,

child and adult domestic workers are often invisible to the outside world and thus particularly vulnerable to violence, exploitation and abuse. Domestic labour becomes even more hazardous when children are trafficked into another town or country to take up service, especially when they do not speak the local language. There is a close correlation between gender and the reasons for trafficking, with girls being trafficked mainly for domestic service and commercial sexual exploitation.

The different experiences of girls and boys make it important to integrate gender concerns into child labour research, advocacy, programmes and policies. Research that reflects gender disparities will provide a more solid basis for actions aimed at reducing child labour. Gender-sensitive programmes and policies that combat and prevent child labour are essential to fulfilling the rights of boys and girls, including the right to an education, a healthy childhood, protection from violence, abuse and exploitation, and rest and recreation.

*See References, page 88.*

national donors must work together to ensure that schools are ‘girl-friendly’ through several measures:

- Encouraging local school authorities and teachers to adopt flexible scheduling.
- Allowing married adolescents and unmarried parents to attend classes.
- Making school facilities safe from gender-based violence.
- Ensuring that schools have separate latrines for girls.
- Building schools close to girls’ homes.
- Encouraging parents and community leaders to be actively involved in school management.<sup>71</sup>

In addition, it is important to emphasize that school curricula help students understand the importance of gender equality.

#### **Eliminating gender disparities in legislation:**

Critical measures to eliminate gender discrimination in women’s land and property rights must include, but should not be limited to:

- Bringing national legislation in line with international human rights standards.
- Reforming land and property rights to eliminate discrimination against women.
- Involving international agencies and non-governmental organizations in efforts to track and expose violations of women’s property rights and in monitoring government compliance with international human rights treaties.<sup>72</sup>

**The role of government in supporting working families:** Governments should undertake legislative, administrative and financial measures to create a strong and enabling environment

for women’s entrepreneurship and participation in the labour market, including:

- Improved employment conditions.
- Creating career development opportunities.
- Eliminating pay gaps based solely on gender.
- Providing safe, affordable, high-quality childcare arrangements.<sup>73</sup>

A further step towards ensuring women’s rights, greater public transparency and economic efficiency is the increasing use of gender-responsive budgets (*see Chapter 5, page 74*). This mechanism analyses the impact of government expenditure and revenue on women and girls compared to men and boys. It neither requires separate budgets for women, nor does it aim to solely increase spending on women-specific programmes. Instead, it helps governments decide how policies should be adjusted, and where resources need to be reallocated to address poverty and gender inequalities.

Budget initiatives aimed at eliminating gender disparities focus on national, provincial and municipal processes and may cover the overall budget or only selected parts of it. They can be carried out within government by the Ministry of Finance in conjunction with the Ministry of Women’s Affairs or other branches of government related to social welfare, or by non-governmental organizations and independent researchers.<sup>74</sup>

#### **The need for better data and analysis:**

Although there are sufficient data to show that women tend to work more and earn less than men, a lack of sex-disaggregated labour statistics precludes a more detailed analysis of the disparities. Better data on employment and income disaggregated by sex could significantly improve the analysis underlying policies and programmes – with benefits to women, children, families and entire economies.