



QUALITY OF WOMEN'S WORK: THEMES AND ISSUES

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KEY THEMES

- Occupational Segregation
 - Within the formal labor market
 - Within the informal labor market
- Decent Work: Two components
 - Quantity of work
 - Quality of employment created
- Programs to enhance working women's welfare
 - Linked to access to resources.
 - Also in terms of their sense of worth and dignity.

OCCUPATIONAL SEGREGATION

- Segregation is central to reinforcing the gender division of labor and vice versa.
- Maintains women's economic dependence because of low pay, insecure employment, and increasing move towards limited social welfare.
- Perpetuated by type and quality of education: girls educational choices limits access to remunerative avenues of employment linked with economic growth.
- Gender-based wage differentials reflect these biases.

QUALITY OF WOMEN'S WORK: THE PROBLEMS (1)

- Pervasiveness of patriarchal norms make it likely that working women face harsh working conditions and labor standards are overlooked.
- Loopholes in labor laws are utilized to keep women temporary workers and/or underemployed.
- Increasing participation of women workers has come along with a race to the bottom (Standing 2002)
- Economic restructuring and globalization sets in motion specific demands on types and forms of women's labor.

QUALITY OF WOMEN'S WORK: THE PROBLEMS (2)

- Reality of migrant labor: domestic and migrant farm workers are exposed to abuse and vulnerability in both the public and private spheres.
- More access to education itself need not necessarily offer women with high-paying, high-skilled and secure jobs.
- Uneven development patterns within countries create job opportunities that do not reflect aspirations of women job seekers (Malhotra & DeGaff 1997).
- Spill over effects of gender-based discriminatory behavior: a) impinges on women workers, b) also has long-term impact on development.

WORKING WOMEN'S WELFARE: PROGRAMS (1)

- Tightening and implementing existing labor laws through better-funded legislative machinery.
- Targeting new forms of employment that arise from globalization through appropriate institutional measures – including legalizing (rather than criminalizing) migrant women workers.
- Development needs to be based on planning that reflects aspirations of workers. Otherwise, a waste of human resources that takes away from sustained socio-economic stability and welfare.

WORKING WOMEN'S WELFARE: PROGRAMS (2)

- Overcoming conceptual problems through systematized definitions: recognizes the multiple types of women's contribution to the formal & informal sectors + public & private spheres.
- Legal instruments are an essential to attack vertical and horizontal occupation segregation.
- Equally important: engaging in activism to make the various players aware of developmental impacts.
- Human capital investment requires recognizing "discriminatory socialization"; additionally measures to overcome them.

Conclusion – Decent Work: The Way Forward?

- Macro-economic policies are gendered and have an impact at the informal sector and private sphere.
- Including diverse interests and voices through representation so that basic security is built into equity measures.
- Quality of work is as important as quantity of work created.