



Building Fair and Productive Workplaces

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The International Labour Organization and Gender Equality

November 5, 2008

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Overview

- The International Labour Organization (ILO): Gender equality mandate
- International Labour Standards: Historical perspective
- Key ILO Conventions on Gender Equality
- International Labour Conference 2009: General Discussion on Gender Equality
- ILO Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work Campaign

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International Labour Organization (ILO)

- Specialized agency of the United Nations
- Mandate is promotion of social justice and internationally recognized human and labour rights
- Adopts international labour standards in the form of Conventions that bind ratifying States and Recommendations that provide guidance

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ILO Promotes Gender Equality through

- international labour standards
- advocating for measurable progress
- technical cooperation
- management, dissemination and sharing of relevant knowledge

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Gender Equality in the ILO's Mandate

- Non-discrimination and the promotion of equality are fundamental principles underpinning the ILO's work since its establishment in 1919
- The protection of women and the principle that men and women should receive equal remuneration for work of equal value were highlighted in the 1919 ILO Constitution (Treaty of Versailles, Part XIII) as areas in need of immediate action

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Gender Equality in the ILO's Mandate

Preamble to the ILO Constitution (1946):

“And whereas conditions of labour exist involving such injustice hardship and privation to large numbers of people as to produce unrest so great that the peace and harmony of the world are imperilled; and an improvement of those conditions is urgently required; as, for example, ... **by the recognition of the principle of equal remuneration for work of equal value...**”

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Gender Equality in the ILO's Mandate

- Principles of non-discrimination and the promotion of equality are an integral component of the ILO's mandate and its Decent Work Agenda that seeks the promotion of decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security, human dignity.
- While the ILO has historically promoted non-discrimination and gender equality, the ILO's approach to gender equality has changed in response to the evolving roles of women and men in society.

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International Labour Standards: Historical Perspective

- Early 20th Century: women were seen as more fragile than men, physically and socially, and therefore in need of special protections
- Early Conventions contained special provisions prohibiting the employment of women in certain areas and for certain processes, reflecting a concern with not endangering women workers' reproductive health
 - 1919: Maternity Protection, Night Work for Women, Lead Poisoning (Women and Children) Recommendation
 - 1921: Night Work of Women (Agriculture) Recommendation
 - 1926: Migration (Protection of Females at Sea) Recommendation
 - 1935: Convention on Underground Work for Women

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International Labour Standards: Historical Perspective

- 1948: Universal Declaration of Human Rights recognizes the principle of equal pay for equal work and ILO emphasis shifts to promotion of equality between men and women in employment and remuneration.
- 1951: Equal Remuneration Convention and Recommendation
- 1958: Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention
- 1965: Women workers with family responsibilities Recommendation
- 1975: Declaration on equality of opportunity and treatment of all women workers

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International Labour Standards: Historical Perspective

- From the 1980s onwards the focus of equality analysis shifted from women to the relations between women and men, and the conviction that any change of women's roles should be accompanied by that of men and their greater participation in family and household duties
- 1981: Convention concerning workers with family responsibilities (applies to men as well as women)
- 2004: ILO Resolution on gender equality, pay equity and maternity protection

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Core International Labour Standards

1998 Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work defines workplace human rights embodied in eight core ILO Conventions:

- Freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining
- Elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour
- Effective abolition of child labour
- Elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation (including equal pay)

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Key ILO Conventions on Gender Equality

- The Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)
- The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)
- The Workers with Family and Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156)
- The Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183)

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The Equal Remuneration Convention, 1951 (No. 100)

- Ratified by 166 ILO member states (Canada in 1972)
- Calls on States to promote the application to all workers of the principle of equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value
- The term ***equal remuneration for men and women workers for work of equal value*** refers to rates of remuneration established without discrimination based on sex

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The Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111)

- Ratified by 168 ILO member states (Canada in 1964)
- Calls on States to declare and pursue a national policy designed to promote equality of opportunity and treatment in respect of employment and occupation, with a view to eliminating any discrimination
- Addresses discrimination on the basis of sex, race, colour, religion, political opinion, national extraction, social origin

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Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156)

- Ratified by 40 ILO Member States
- Calls on States to make it an aim of national policy to enable persons with family responsibilities to engage in employment without being subject to discrimination and, to the extent possible, without conflict between their employment and family responsibilities.
- Family responsibilities include those related to dependent children and other immediate family members in need of care and support.

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Maternity Protection Convention, 2000 (No. 183)

- Ratified by 15 ILO Member States
- Calls on States to provide for health protection, maternity leave and benefits, leave in case of illness or complications, employment protection and non-discrimination for women and breastfeeding mothers
- Applies to all employed women

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2009 International Labour Conference : Gender equality at the heart of decent work

- Last ILC general discussion on gender equality in 1985
- “gender-based discrimination continues to violate fundamental principles and rights at work and human rights in general, and to weaken economic growth and reduce the efficiency of enterprises and labour markets, while women continue to be more vulnerable to poverty and decent work deficits than men.”
- “equal pay for work of equal value is one of the least understood concepts in the field of action against discrimination.” 2007 Global Report: Equality at Work: Tackling the Challenges

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2009 International Labour Conference Discussion: Gender equality at the heart of decent work

- Implementation of the 2004 resolution concerning gender equality, pay equity and maternity protection
- Implementation of gender mainstreaming in future ILO technical cooperation programmes and projects
- Recommendations to the ILO on enhancing its efforts towards gender equality in the world of work
- Measures to promote ratification and implementation of the key equality Conventions of the ILO and other relevant ILO standards.

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Gender Equality at the Heart of Decent Work ILO Global Public Awareness Raising Campaign

- 2009 is the ILO's 90th anniversary, the 10th anniversary of its gender action plan and the year of the ILC's general discussion on gender equality
- Gender Equality Campaign (June 2008 to June 2009)
- The initiative is part of the ILO's overall Decent Work Campaign

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Campaign Objectives

- Increase awareness and understanding of gender equality issues in the world of work
- Highlight linkages between gender equality and securing decent work for all women and men
- Promote ratification and application of key ILO gender equality standards
- Advocate the importance and benefits of overcoming existing barriers to gender equality

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Campaign Themes

1. Education and child labour (June 2008)
2. Maternity, paternity and work (July 2008)
3. Employment for young women and men (August 2008)
4. Equality, non-discrimination and pay equity (Sept. 2008)
5. Senior workers (Oct. 2008)
6. Gender and technology for skills and entrepreneurship/small enterprise development

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Campaign Themes

7. Migrant workers (domestic workers and trafficking)
8. Gender and climate change
9. Social dialogue: transition from informality to formality
10. Workers with families with responsibilities: links to paid-unpaid work/care economy
11. Occupational health and safety: workplace violence
12. Women in the ILO

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International Labour Organization

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