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Global Employment Trends for Women: Brief, March 2008

Abstract
[Excerpt] Access to labour markets and to decent and productive employment is crucial in the process of creating greater equality between men and women. The analysis of the latest data in GET Women 2008 shows that in 2007, 1.2 billion women around the world worked, almost 200 million or 18.4 per cent more than ten years ago. But, the number of unemployed women also grew from 70.2 to 81.6 million over the same period and in 2007, women at the global level still had a higher likelihood of being unemployed than men. The female unemployment rate stood at 6.4 per cent compared to the male rate of 5.7 per cent. The report shows clearly that most regions are making progress in increasing the number of women in decent employment, but that full gender equality in terms of labour market access and conditions of employment has not yet been attained.

Keywords
International Labour Organization, ILO, labor market, development, economic growth, women

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GLOBAL EMPLOYMENT TRENDS FOR WOMEN
March 2008

International Labour Office, Geneva

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1. Overview

Decent work for women is not just right, but smart

In 2007, 1.2 billion women around the world worked, almost 200 million or 18.4 per cent more than ten years ago.[1] But, the number of unemployed women also grew from 70.2 to 81.6 million over the same period and in 2007, women at the global level still had a higher likelihood of being unemployed than men. The female unemployment rate stood at 6.4 per cent compared to the male rate of 5.7 per cent. (See table 3.) As for women who do find work, they are often confined to work in the less productive sectors of economies and in status groups that carry higher economic risk and a lesser likelihood of meeting the characteristics that define decent work, including access to social protection, basic rights and a voice at work. Also, as a result of the type of work where women can find employment (in terms of both sector and status), they often earn less than men.

But, is it all bad news concerning female labour market trends? Certainly not, there are some positive trends as well: education levels for women around the world continue to increase and gender gaps for certain labour market indicators are decreasing in many regions. To find which regions are making progress in the economic integration of women and in offering them an equal chance at attaining decent work, this year's *Global Employment Trends for Women*[2] is organized according to nine regional trends analyses.[3] The report shows clearly that most regions are making progress in increasing the number of women in decent employment, but that full gender equality in terms of labour market access and conditions of employment has not yet been attained.

Economic empowerment for women has a lot to do with their ability or inability to participate in labour markets and with the conditions of employment that the women who do manage to find work face. The international community stresses more and more the fact that promoting decent work is the only sustainable way out of poverty. In fact, a new target was recently introduced in the Millennium Development Goals calling for "full and productive employment and decent work for all".[4] There is also growing recognition that labour markets are the key transmission mechanism through which the benefits of growth can be distributed to the poor and disadvantaged groups. Access to labour markets and, more specifically, to decent employment is thereby crucial in the process towards improving equality between men and women. *Decent work for women is also a precondition for economic development since, in the long run, economies cannot afford to ignore an untapped resource such as that which could be offered by female labour.*

In this context it is interesting to note that the most successful region in terms of economic growth over the last decade, namely East Asia, is also the region with the highest regional labour force participation rate for women, low unemployment rates for both women and men and relatively small gender gaps in sectoral as well as status distribution. Of course, there are many reasons that drive economic development – making the most of the productive potential of

---

[1] The expressions "work" or "in work" summarizes all people employed according to the ILO definition, which includes self-employed, employed, employers as well as contributing family members. There is no distinction between formal sector employment and informal sector employment. The expressions "employed", "in work", "working" and "have a job" are used as synonyms in this publication. (See Annex 3, Glossary of labour market terms, for more information.)

[2] The ILO *Global employment trends* series have been published on a yearly basis since 2003. On occasion, special editions are produced to analyse labour market trends for segments of the population such as youth (2004 and 2006) and women (2004 and 2007), or for certain regions (for example, *Global employment trends supplement for Europe & Central Asia*, 2005 and *African employment trends*, 2007). These publications have become a regular medium to inform ILO constituents, the research community and also a wider public on labour market trends at the global and regional levels. Data are based on the Global Employment Trends Models, which are described in detail in Annex I. All past reports are available for download from www.ilo.org/trends.

[3] See Annex 2 for details of the regional groupings used in this and other ILO Global Employment Trends series.

[4] For more information on the new MDG, see ILO, *Key indicators of the labour market, 5th Edition* (Geneva, 2007), "Decent employment and the Millennium Development Goals", Chapter 1; available for download from www.ilo.org/kilm.

both male and female labour forces is an important one but certainly not the only determinant. *The model to aim for is one in which women are able to contribute to growth and, at the same time, profit from this growth as participants in labour markets, keeping in mind that the one does not automatically follow from the other.* If women remain stuck in low-paid, low-productive jobs they will not see the rightful returns of their labour. In short, increased labour force participation of women has great potential as a contribution to economic development, but only if the jobs in which women are engaged are decent. Most regions have a long way to go in working towards the economic integration of women and, therefore, a huge potential for economic development remains available to be tapped.

Despite the evident challenges involved in achieving gender equality in the world of work the goal remains a worthy one and the challenges well worth taking up. As of now, however, the fact remains that far fewer women participate in labour markets than men. At the global level less than 70 women (66.9) are economically active for every 100 men. (See table 2.) *While one should not assume that all women want to work, it is safe to say that women want to be given the same freedom as men to choose to work if they want to; and if they do choose to work, they should have the same chance of finding decent jobs as men.*

As stated earlier, this report focuses on female labour market trends at the regional level.[5] Regarding global trends, some significant trends are identified here:

- Of all people employed in the world, 40 per cent are women. This share has not changed over the last ten years.
- The share of women above the working age (15 years and over in most countries) who are employed (the employment-to-population ratio) was 49.1 per cent in 2007 compared to a male employment-to-population ratio of 74.3 per cent. (See table 4.) Both ratios decreased slightly over the decade. In six out of nine regions, however, female employment-to-population ratios increased over the last ten years. The three exceptions were East Asia, South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. Male ratios, in contrast, saw decreases in six of the nine regions.
- In absolute numbers, worldwide there were equal numbers of women and men above the age of 15 years in 2007 (2.4 billion of each), but among these only 1.2 billion women were employed as opposed to 1.8 billion men. (See table 1.)
- In developed countries a portion of the employment gap can be attributed to the fact that some women freely choose to stay at home because they can afford to not enter the labour market. Yet in some lesser-developed regions of the world, remaining outside of the labour force is not a choice for the majority of women but an obligation; it is likely that women would opt to work in these regions if it became socially acceptable to do so. This of course does not mean that these women remain at home doing nothing; most are heavily engaged in household activities. Regardless, because most female household work continues to be classified as non-economic activity, the women who are thus occupied are classified as outside of the labour force.
- Attracting more women into the labour force requires as a first step equal access to education and equal opportunity in gaining the skills necessary to compete in the labour

[5] One known shortcoming of this approach is the fact that country-level variations can be masked due to the nature of world and regional aggregation. Regional aggregates are dominated by the trends of the most populous country, and without added information of trends at the country-level, knowledge of country-level variations becomes lost. Trends for East Asia, for example, are clearly those of China, whereas the labour market situation facing women in Mongolia, which is also a country in the region, might be quite diverse. Due to space constraints, few country-level examples are discussed in this report; however, our readers are encouraged to review country-level data from sources such as the ILO, *Key indicators of the labour market, op.cit.* with an aim to verifying or refuting employment trends for women at the country level. More country level analysis can also be found in ILO's various regional reports as well as a forthcoming working paper based on this report: S. Elder and D. Schmidt, "Global and regional employment trends for women", Economic and Labour Market Papers, ILO, forthcoming 2008.

market. More women are gaining access to education, but equality in education is still far from the reality in some regions.

- In addition, broadening access for women to employment in an enlarged scope of industries and occupations will be important to enhancing opportunities for them in the labour market. Society's ability to accept new economic roles for women and the economy's ability to create the jobs to accommodate them are the key prerequisites to improving labour market outcomes for women, as well as for economic development on the whole.
- Overall, there is not a significant difference between the sexes when it comes to young people's (aged 15 to 24 years) search for work. The unemployment rate of female youth at 12.5 per cent is only slightly higher than the male rate of 12.2 per cent. (See table 3.) A young person's likelihood to be unemployed continues to be three times higher than for adults.
- Whereas ten years ago agriculture was still the main employer for women, the services sector now provides the majority of female jobs: out of the total number of employed women in 2007, 36.1 per cent worked in agriculture and 46.3 per cent in services. Male sectoral shares in comparison were 34.0 per cent in agriculture and 40.4 per cent in services. (See table 5.)
- The poorer the region, the greater the likelihood that women are among the ranks of the contributing family workers or own-account workers.[6] The two statuses together make up the newly defined "vulnerable employment".[7] Female contributing family workers, in particular, are not likely to be economically independent.
- The move away from vulnerable employment into wage and salaried work can be a major step toward economic freedom and self-determination for many women. Economic independence or at least co-determination in resource distribution within the family is highest when women are in wage and salaried work or are employers, lower when they are own-account workers and lowest when they are contributing family workers. The share of women in wage and salaried work grew during the last ten years from 41.8 per cent in 1997 to 46.4 per cent in 2007 whereas the share of vulnerable employment decreased from 56.1 to 51.7 per cent. However, the vulnerable share is still larger for women than for men, especially in the world's poorest regions. (See table 6.)

[6] The international classification of status in employment defines four statuses (all of which are defined in Annex 3): (1) Wage and salaried workers; (2) Employers; (3) Own-account workers; and (4) Contributing family workers. Two additional categories – members of producers' cooperatives and workers not classifiable by status – are not addressed in this report. For more information, see the Resolution concerning the international classification of status in employment, adopted by the 15th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, Geneva, 1993; website: www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/class/icse.htm.

[7] Vulnerable employment is a newly defined measure of persons who are employed under relatively precarious circumstances as indicated by the status in employment. Because contributing family workers and own-account workers are less likely to have formal work arrangements, access to benefits or social protection programmes and are more "at risk" to economic cycles, these are the statuses categorized as "vulnerable". The vulnerable employment rate, therefore, is calculated as the sum of own-account workers and contributing family workers as a percentage of total employment. The indicator is highly gender sensitive since, historically, contributing family work is a status that is dominated by women. There is also a connection between vulnerable employment and poverty: if the proportion of vulnerable workers is sizeable, it may be an indication of widespread poverty. The connection arises because workers in the vulnerable statuses lack the social protection and safety nets to guard against times of low economic demand and often are incapable of generating sufficient savings for themselves and their families to offset these times. The indicator is not without its limitations; some wage and salaried workers might also carry high economic risk and some own-account workers might be quite well-off and not vulnerable at all. But, despite the limitations, vulnerable employment shares are indicative of employment in the informal economy, especially for the less developed economies and regions, and the fact that a strong correlation has been established between high poverty rates for a region and high shares in vulnerable employment does substantiate the weight of the new indicator to measure progress towards the goal of decent employment for all. For more details on the indicator and its interpretation in tandem with other measures, see ILO, *Key indicators of the labour market, op.cit*, Chapter 1.

- The status of women in the world of work has improved, but gains have been slow. While female shares in wage and salaried work versus vulnerable employment are approaching those of men, the sluggish pace of change means that disparities remain significant.

When undertaking a comparative analysis of labour markets at the global and regional levels, one is restricted by the labour market indicators that are available and comparable across regions. For the analyses undertaken in this report, the main indicators used are employment, unemployment, status in employment and employment by sector. *Analysing the four indicators together clearly shows that policies to enhance women's chances to participate equally in labour markets are starting to pay off, but the pace with which gaps are closing is slow.* Despite some progress in getting women into employment and under more secure statuses, there is no room for complacency.

If more indicators were available to allow one to better judge the quality of employment and other labour market issues, such as decision-making power, balancing work and family life, the glass ceiling, earnings, violence at the workplace, social protection, occupational injuries, credit market access, etc. one would certainly find out more about gender disparities and the harsh realities of many women's working lives around the world. *In short, the economic integration of women, which comes only when labour market barriers are lowered and women are given an equal chance to attain decent work, remains both a necessity for economic development and a worthy goal in its own right.*

2. Sub-Saharan Africa

Women continue to bear a heavier burden in the lack of decent jobs

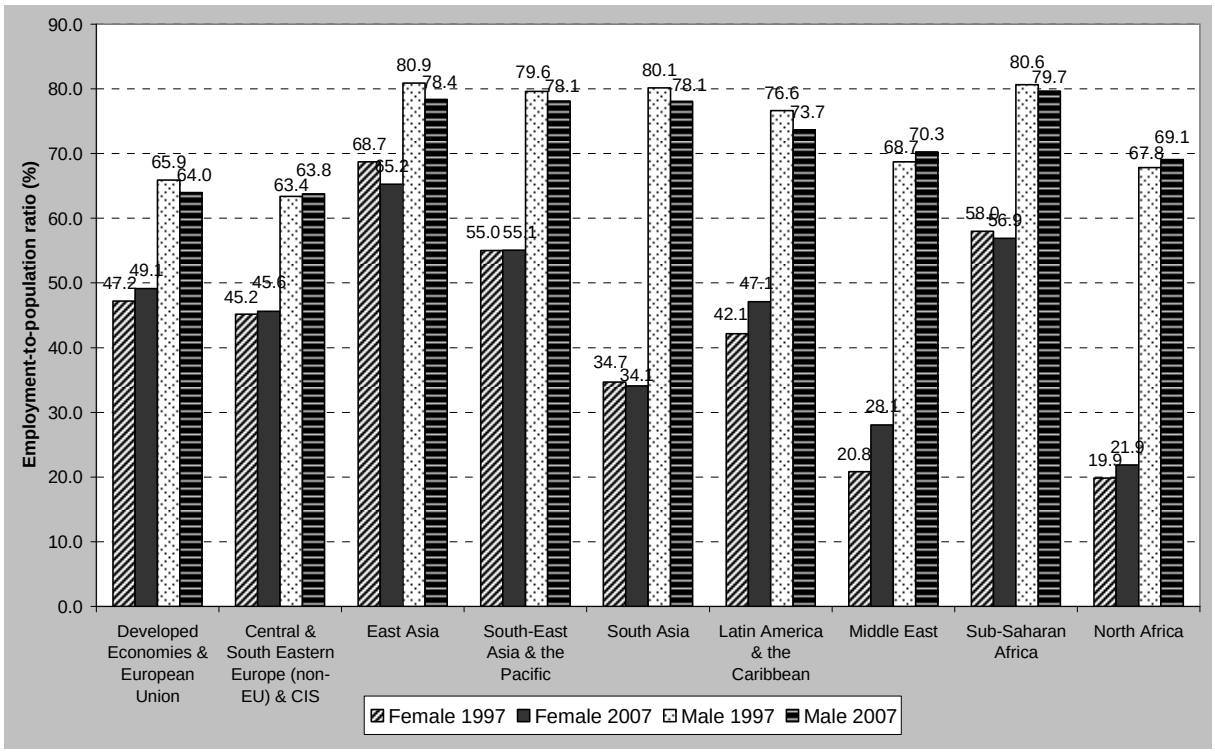
Despite recent signs of economic progress, sub-Saharan Africa continues to be the region with the highest poverty shares in the world. The insufficient creation of decent jobs in the region and widespread poverty continue to be heavy burdens on women. In this region women have little choice but to work – the female employment-to-population ratios are the second highest in the world (behind East Asia) – but, nonetheless, widespread poverty persists, implying a grave malfunction in the region's labour markets. Decent and productive employment with its implied decent earnings, social protection, fundamental rights at work and social dialogue is certainly the exception rather than the rule.

Employment-to-population ratios in the region were high for both women and men, 56.9 and 79.7 per cent, respectively, in 2007. (See table 4 and figure 1.) However, the fact that a large proportion of women are working in the region should not be interpreted as a positive development (as it might be in other regions with higher levels of development) since the comparably high shares of employment are strongly related to the elevated incidence of poverty in the region. A poor person will have to work in order to subsist and regardless of the quality of that work. In addition, a lack of educational alternatives means that a large proportion of young women, who might otherwise be in school, also work in order to contribute to the household income. This is reflected in the high employment-to-population ratio of 49 per cent for young women in the region. (See table 4.)

Even in a poverty stricken region where sustenance can depend on as many hands working as possible, presumably without deference to gender or age, a gender gap exists. In this poorest region of the world, the male employment-to-population ratio continues to be higher than that of females. Nor has the gender gap between men and women changed over the last ten years, either for youth or for the total labour force. The difference between female and male employment-to-population ratios was 22.7 percentage points in 2007 as well as in 1997. And for youth the gap stood at 14.5 points in 2007, almost unchanged from 1997. In sub-Saharan Africa the reasons for a continuing gender gap when it comes to employment are less likely to stem from discrimination at the workplace (although this does occur as well), but rather more from the necessity for some

females to occupy themselves at home with the daily subsistence activities of poor households (fetching water, preparing food, tending children, etc.).[8]

Figure 1
Employment-to-population ratios, by sex and region, 1997 and 2007



Source: Annex table 4.

Despite the fact that poverty tends to dictate that people in sub-Saharan Africa take whatever job is available (hence the above average employment-to-population ratios), unemployment, whereby persons looking for work are unable to find any, remains a significant challenge as well.[9] A comparison of the rates by sex – 9.1 per cent for women and 7.5 per cent for men in 2007 – shows that the challenge is greater for women than for men. (See table 3 and figure 5.) Youth unemployment rates are even higher with 13.9 per cent for women and 13.6 per cent for men.

Agriculture continues to provide the vast majority of jobs for women: almost 7 out of 10 women (67.9 per cent) in the region work in the agriculture sector, mainly in subsistence-level agriculture under harsh conditions and with little or no economic security. This share has decreased over time (from 74.8 per cent in 1997 to 67.9 per cent in 2007), but the move of men away from agriculture in the region has occurred at a much quicker pace. (See table 5 and figure 3.)

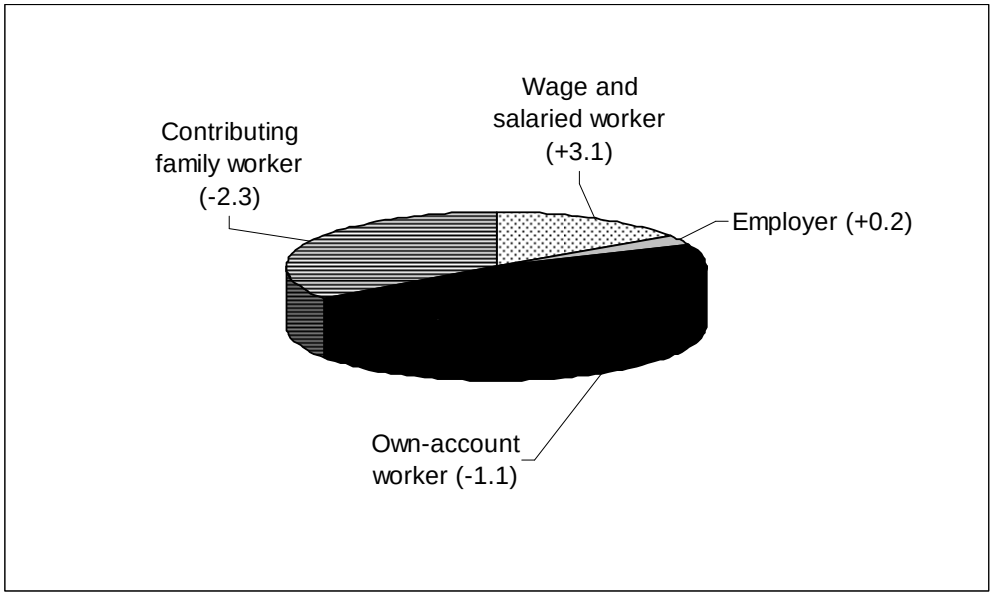
[8] In such cases, the boundary between economic and non-economic activities remains blurred; many argue that certain female-based household activities constitute an economic contribution to the household and should, therefore, be counted as productive activities within the statistical framework of the economically active population. But, until the (unlikely) event of a major revision to the SNA-defined production boundaries, most female household work continues to be classified as non-economic activity and the women who are thus occupied are classified as outside of the labour force.

[9] The existence of unemployed people in a poor region does not necessarily contradict the hypothesis that poor people cannot afford to remain looking for work (in which case they would be counted as unemployed), but rather must work in order to earn enough money for survival (in which case they would be counted as employed). There are varied degrees of wealth even within a poor region and what is likely to happen is that the unemployed person either comes from a higher income background and has the economic means to support themself during the job search period or can be supported by the common income of a multi-earner household. The latter is likely to apply to young people from poor backgrounds as families often pull together resources so that the most educated can spend time looking for a good job that would enable them to support the family in the future. This is one of the reasons why the youth unemployment rate is generally much higher than the overall unemployment rate.

The female employment share in industry was almost unchanged during the last ten years at the world's lowest level of 5.8 per cent. In comparison, the men's share in industry is more than twice as high. In the services sector shares of women and men are very close at 26.4 and 25.2 per cent, respectively.

The share of persons in vulnerable employment in sub-Saharan Africa continues to be very high, and again, even higher for women than for men. (See table 6 and figure 8.) Of the women working in 2007, more than 8 out of 10 (81.7 per cent) were doing so under vulnerable conditions as either a (unpaid) contributing family worker or own-account worker. In other words, less than 2 out of 10 women had relatively higher economic security as either wage and salaried workers or employers. (See table 6 and figure 2.) The picture looks only slightly better for men: only 3 out of 10 men (30.3 per cent) in sub-Saharan Africa belong to the group of wage and salaried workers. But, at least unlike women, few are trapped as contributing family workers with no possibility of earning a direct income at all. The female share in this status group was 34.7 per cent compared to 18.4 per cent for men. The situation has improved over time with shares of persons in vulnerable employment falling for both sexes, although at a faster rate for men than for women (male shares between 1997 and 2007 fell from 71.4 to 66.4 per cent while female shares decreased from 85.0 to 81.7 per cent).

Figure 2
Distribution of female status in employment in sub-Saharan Africa, 2007
(percentage point change from 1997 in parentheses)



Source: Annex table 6.

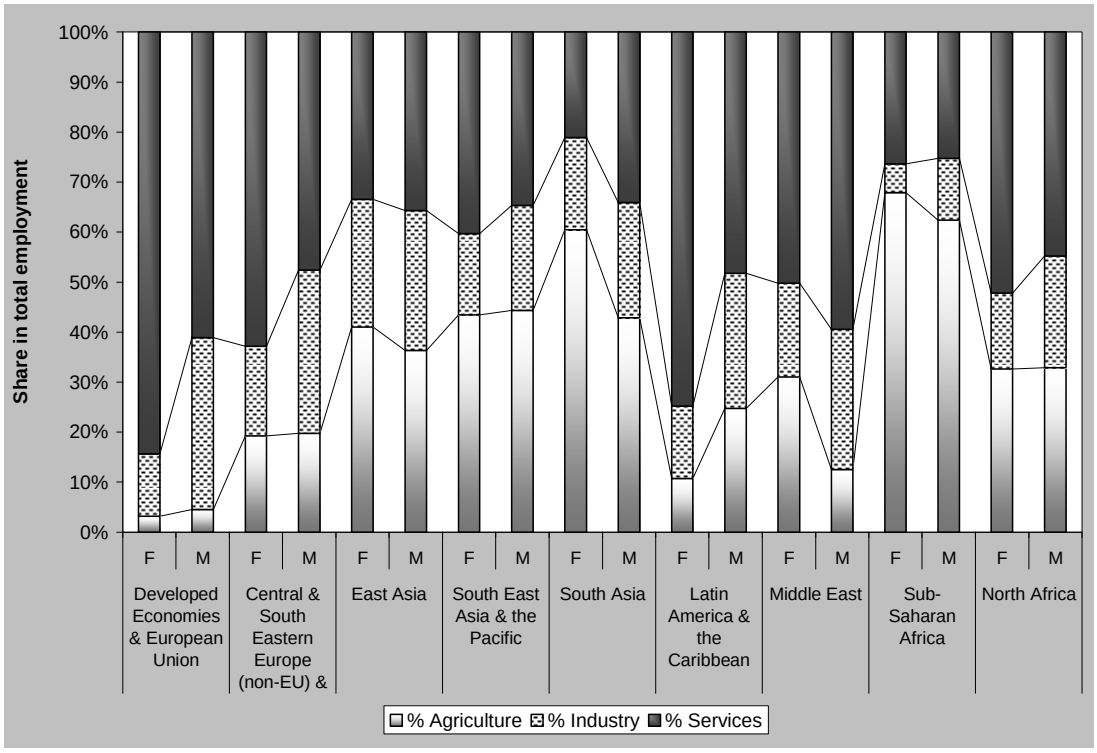
In short, the burden of vulnerable employment in the region continues to fall heavily on women who remain mainly in the agricultural sector and improvements in employment status and sectoral distribution seem to benefit mostly men. In 2007, the share of women with a wage and salaried job stood at only 15.5 per cent, which represents half of the same share of men. Also, women face a higher risk of finding themselves unemployed. Taking everything together, the situation seems to be one in which the few wage and salaried jobs that are created in the formal sector tend to go to men before women, which means women in the region are generally left with the options of taking up vulnerable employment positions or (although less viable given the necessity to earn some income) remaining unemployed. The high economic activity of sub-Saharan women can be a positive force for increasing economic growth rates for the region, but only if productivity and working conditions are improved.

3. North Africa

Tremendous gap in labour market participation between women and men; unemployment rates for women are the highest in the world

Unlike in sub-Saharan Africa, the main difficulties facing North African women vis-à-vis labour markets is less the poor quality of employment (although this applies as well) than the lack of access to labour markets altogether. Labour market activity – either working or looking for work – is still more the exception than the rule for women in the region. This is mainly a result of social traditions that remain static over time. For 100 economically active men in North Africa there are only 35 economically active women. (See table 2.) This represents the highest gender gap in the world. In addition, North Africa has the lowest employment-to-population ratio in the world. Only 2 out of 10 working-age women (21.9 per cent) are employed compared to 7 out of 10 men (69.1 per cent). (See table 4 and figure 1.)

Figure 3
Distribution of employment by sector (sectoral employment as percentage of total employment), by sex and region, 2007



Source: Annex table 5.

Even fewer young women work; only 1.5 out of 10 women (14.7 per cent) between the age of 15 to 24 years are employed, a statistic that causes particular worry because it highlights the inefficiency of the economy to provide jobs for its youth, despite an increased investment in female education in the recent past and in the face of a very youthful population. Still, in 2015 the youth share in the working-age population in the region will make up more than 25 per cent of the total working age population.[10] Given the high level of waste the region faces in terms of lost economic contribution of young women, it is foreseen that this situation will not be affordable in the long run.

[10] See ILO, *Global employment trends, January 2008* (Geneva, 2008), p. 34; www.ilo.org/trends.

So, the region is one in which few women are given the right opportunity to look for work, but for those that do, the job search is a long and difficult one and oftentimes, ultimately unsuccessful. This is reflected in the female unemployment rate of 16.2 per cent (compared to 9 per cent for men), which is the world's highest. (See table 3 and figure 5.) And young women face the almost hopeless situation of a 32.3 per cent unemployment rate. The cause of high female unemployment rates in the region is twofold. On the one hand, some employers openly give preference to male jobseekers, and on the other hand, the women that have gained access to education often do not wish to take up the type of jobs that are available to them. Some employers do actually prefer female workers, but the jobs offered are low-skilled and low-paid. The overall result is that some women will remain unemployed while waiting for the "right" job (with some holding out for public sector work) and other women – the majority – have little choice but to fall outside of the labour force. The high inactivity rate of women, at 73.9 per cent, gives clear evidence of this.

Sectoral employment shifts in the region have been slow. Of the women that do work, approximately one-third (32.6 per cent) do so in agriculture. In fact, it was only in this region and in the Middle East that the employment share of women in agriculture increased over the last ten years. At the same time, the share of women in industry decreased from 19.1 to 15.2 per cent between 1997 and 2007. The services sector provides more than half of all the jobs for women in North Africa (52.2 per cent). (See table 5 and figure 3.)

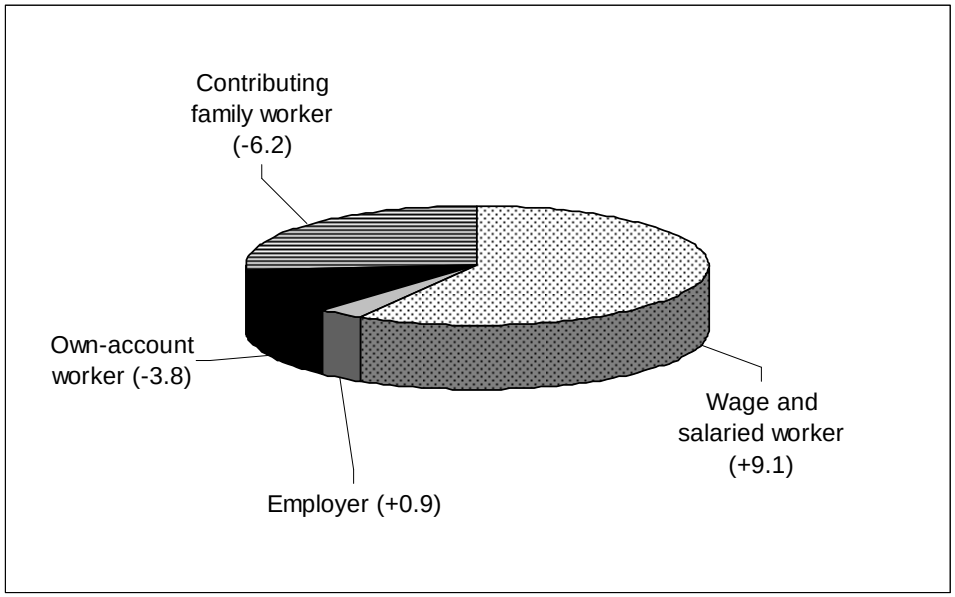
In North Africa increases in productivity had a considerable impact on the number of people in vulnerable employment situations. The share of vulnerable employment in total employment was reduced from 36.9 to 30.7 per cent over the ten-year period. It is noteworthy that the decrease was mainly driven by the movement of women out of vulnerable employment situations. (See table 6 and figure 8.)

There has been a substantial increase in the share of women in wage and salaried work over the period to an extent that their share is now almost equal to men's at just below 60 per cent. Ten years ago the gap was still considerable (the female share in wage and salaried work was 49.3 per cent compared to the male share of 57.1 per cent). (See table 6 and figure 4.) The change is partly due to the heavy investment in female education in recent years, but also to the fact that many wage and salaried jobs are found in the public sector where women find it easier to get a job than in the private sector.[11] What the latter means is that those women who do find employment – and these tend to be women from higher income backgrounds with family connections – are typically well protected in terms of security and income. However, one cannot ignore the fact that 8 out of 10 women in the region remain economically inactive.

With little or no means of directly contributing to family income, these women are very often completely economically dependent on men, a situation which often impacts on their decision-making capacity within the household. Priority in the region should be to focus on integrating more women into the labour force and improving their chances of attaining decent jobs. A comparison of population versus employment numbers helps to visualize the challenge ahead: in North Africa there are 67 million women who are of working age and 65 million men, but only 15 million women have a job compared to 46 million men. The comparative advantage in the region is not cheap labour, but more its human capital that can be used to lead the way for a shift of industries towards higher productivity products and services. Well-educated economically active women have to be given a fair chance to contribute to the developmental process in the region.

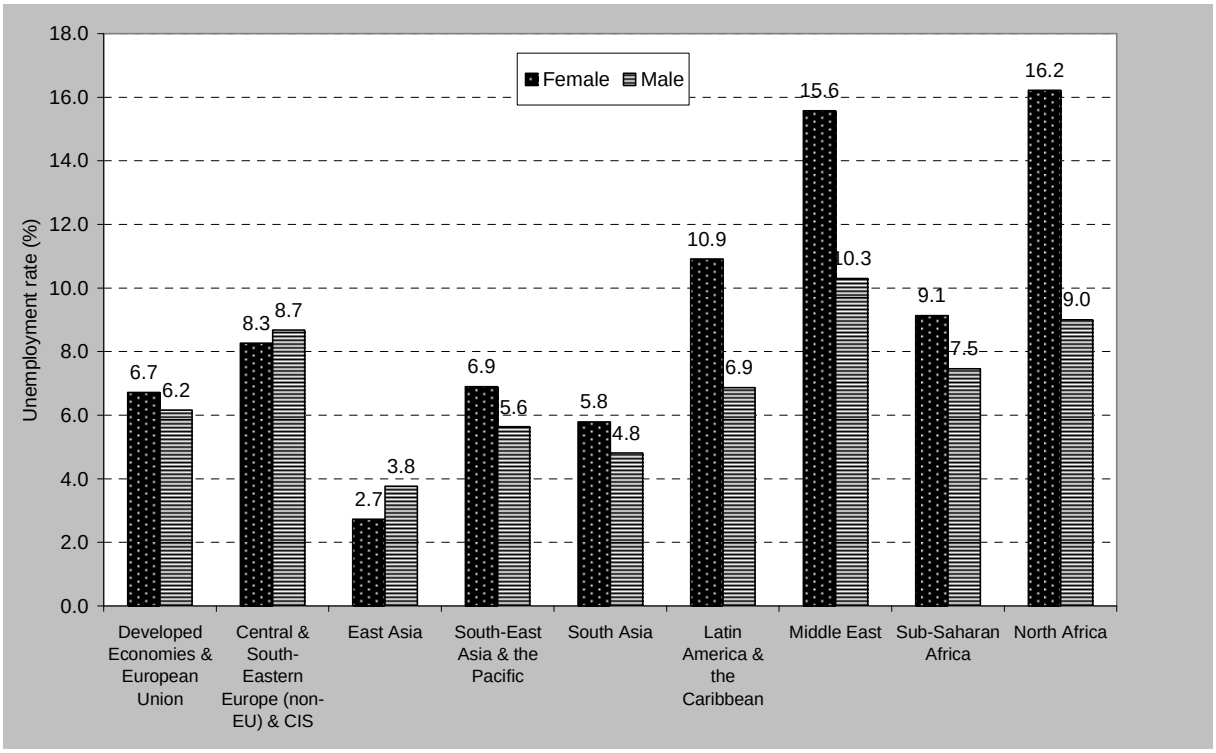
[11] This phenomenon is not unique to North Africa. In other regions as well, where social traditions tend to discourage female economic activity and discrimination is strong against hiring women in the private sector, the public sector offers the best opportunity for employment for women, especially for educated women. See, for example, South-East Asia & the Pacific and the Middle East.

Figure 4
Distribution of female status in employment in North Africa, 2007
(percentage point change from 1997 in parentheses)



Source: Annex table 6.

Figure 5
Unemployment rates, by sex and region, 2007



Source: Annex table 3.

4. Middle East

The few women participating in labour markets face unemployment or vulnerable employment

Despite the considerable differences in the countries in this region, with high-income oil-producing Gulf States on the one hand and conflict-torn economies like Lebanon and Palestine on the other, when it comes to the labour market barriers women face, the story changes little from country to country. The region has the second lowest labour force participation rate for women (33.3 per cent) and the second highest gender gap in labour force participation: for every 100 men only 39 women are economically active. (See table 2.) But, on the positive side, the region also showed the highest increase in female labour force participation rates. Between 1997 and 2007, the rate increased by an impressive 7.7 percentage points.

The region also saw a considerable increase in female employment-to-population ratios during this period. The ratio stood at 28.1 per cent in 2007, up from 20.8 per cent in 1997. (See table 4 and figure 1.) But, even given the recent increase, female employment-to-population ratios in the Middle East remain below the world average of 49.1 per cent. And, once again, like in most other regions, young women face even greater challenges than older women: only 2 out of 10 (19.5 per cent) young women in the region actually have a job. For young men, slightly more than 4 out of 10 (44.3 per cent) are working.

The region's unemployment trend is also cause for concern. The total number of unemployed was more than one third higher in 2007 than ten years ago.[12] The increase in unemployed women was more than 50 per cent. The female unemployment rate was 15.6 per cent, making it the second highest in the world, behind only North Africa. (See table 3 and figure 5.) Youth unemployment is even more worrying as the risk of being unemployed is three times higher for young people than for adults. The female youth unemployment rate stood at 29.5 per cent (in comparison with 21.1 per cent for young men). But, there are some signs of improvement: at least the decrease of 4 percentage points for young women's unemployment rate between 1997 and 2007 was higher than that of all other regions.

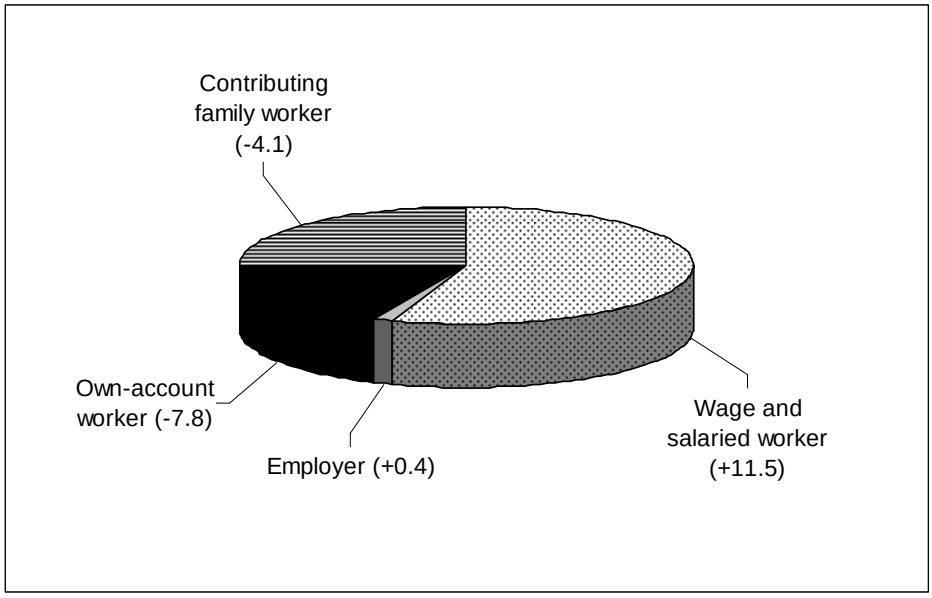
Of the women in the region who do work – remember it is only around one-third of those above the age of 15 years – approximately half work in the services sector (50.2 per cent), a slight decrease from ten years earlier. (See table 5 and figure 3.) And 31.0 per cent of female workers are engaged in agricultural work. As in North Africa, the share in agriculture represents an increase from that of ten years ago. These two regions, therefore, contradict a global trend towards rapidly shrinking agricultural sectors and increasing services sectors, at least for women (the male shares of employment in agriculture have shown decreases in every region of the world). Overall, the female situation in terms of sectoral employment shares showed very little change over time, making this region unique. This is a worrisome trend given that the chance to find a decent job is often much higher in the services sector and the highest in the industry sector. Sectoral shifts in male employment were much more pronounced. The already low level of male employment in the agricultural sector decreased further by over 7 percentage points and stood at 12.5 per cent in 2007. Most men moved out of agriculture into jobs in the services sector (the share in services increased from 53.3 to 59.4 per cent).

There is evidence of a gender bias in the Middle East when measured in terms of employment status. The share of women in vulnerable employment is much higher than that of men (43.2 per cent for women compared to 28.2 per cent for men in 2007). (See table 6 and figure 8.) Women are also more likely than men to be contributing family workers (25.3 per cent in

[12] See ILO, *Global employment trends, op.cit.* for world and regional data at the aggregated level.

comparison with 5.2 per cent for men) and less likely to achieve wage and salaried work (55.3 per cent versus 65.2 per cent for men). (See figure 6.)

Figure 6
Distribution of female status in employment in the Middle East, 2007
(percentage point change from 1997 in parentheses)



Source: Annex table 6.

One should not, however, disregard the fact that in comparison to other regions this female share in wage and salaried work can be considered high or at least higher than the world average of 46.4 per cent, and that, likewise, the share of vulnerable employment is comparatively low. What this means is that, as in North Africa, female employment is encouraged mainly in the public sector and that the women who do manage to find work there can be considered relatively well off in terms of access to benefits and job security. What results is a phenomenon in which a minority of women has attained decent employment while the majority of the female working-age population – 66.7 per cent – remains outside of the labour force.

Even though over the ten-year period the region followed a highly employment-intensive growth path, the growth in employment was too low to avoid an increase in unemployment in the face of high labour force growth (on average 4.9 per cent annually between 1997 and 2007).[13] The situation in which a large supply of labour competes for a limited number of jobs is exacerbated by the steady inflow of cheap migrant labour in the region, especially in the Gulf States. It remains to be seen whether the employment intensive path of the region will motivate more women to participate in the labour market. For the time being the situation for women is difficult as can be seen from a comparison of population versus employment numbers for men and women: in the Middle East there are 61 million women who are of working age and 67 million men, but only 17 million women have a job compared to 47 million men. It is clear that increasing women's participation in the region will depend not only on their motivation, but also on the ability of society to accept new economic roles for women and remove existing barriers to economic integration.

[13] ibid.

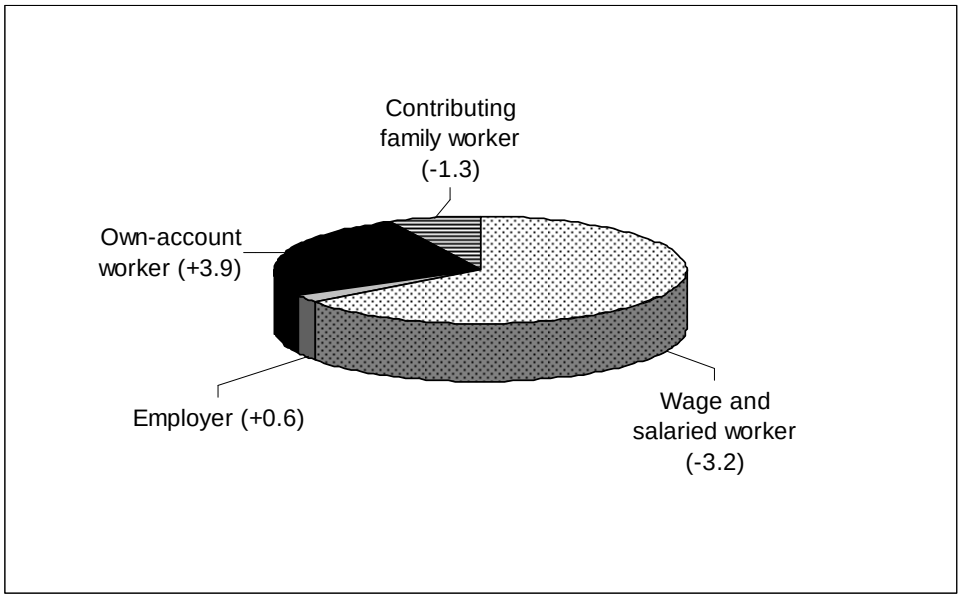
5. Latin America & the Caribbean

Women dominate the services sector, which becomes an increasing source of vulnerable employment

The increase of female labour force participation from 47.2 to 52.9 per cent between 1997 and 2007 was the second highest of all the regions (after the Middle East).[14] (See table 2.) This increase is especially remarkable given that the starting level was already not far from the world average in 1997. Both increasing female rates – the highest of all regions – and declining male participation rates in the region resulted in a decrease of the gender gap in economically active females compared to males. In 2007, 67 women were active per every 100 economically active men. Still, the question remains whether increased female participation implied improvements in their labour market conditions; a collective review of other indicators has shown that this has not necessarily been the case.

The employment-to-population ratio for women in Latin America & the Caribbean improved as well, increasing 5 percentage points from 42.1 per cent in 1997 to 47.1 per cent in 2007. (See table 4 and figure 1.) But, the female unemployment rate in the region remains far above the rate of men (the female unemployment rate was 10.9 per cent in 2007 compared to 6.9 per cent for men). The size of the gap in male and female unemployment rates is behind only those of the Middle East and North Africa. (See table 3 and figure 5.)

Figure 7
Distribution of female status in employment in Latin America & the Caribbean, 2007
(percentage point change from 1997 in parentheses)



Source: Annex table 6.

The sectoral pattern of female employment reflects a higher degree of development in Latin America & the Caribbean compared with other developing regions. The agricultural sector is

[14] Regional data presented here and in other *Global employment trends* reports differ from that of the annual ILO *Panorama laboral* (Labour overview). The reason has to do with the diverse purposes of the publications and differing aggregation methodologies: data, analysis and regional estimations in the *Panorama laboral* cover mainly urban areas whereas analysis and regional estimates in the *Global employment trends* publications are based on country-level indicators in the region with national coverage.

rather small in terms of its share of employment and, contrary to trends elsewhere, the female share in agriculture is much smaller than that of men: 10.7 per cent for women compared to 24.7 per cent for men. (See table 5 and figure 3.) There is no other region in the world where the agricultural employment share of men exceeds that of women by so much. The picture is completely different in the industry sector where 14.5 per cent of all employed women work in comparison to 27.1 per cent of all employed men. The vast majority of women work in the services sector. The female share of employment in services, at 74.8 per cent, is the world's second highest behind only the Developed Economies & EU. For men the share was 48.2 per cent. Even in absolute numbers, more women work in this sector than men.

Although the gaps between female and male participation rates and employment ratios are narrowing in Latin America & the Caribbean and there is a relatively equal distribution in terms of employment status, the high female unemployment rates and the large number of women with vulnerable jobs in low-productivity services remain as indications of an unstable future for women's economic prospects. When finding work is known to be difficult, and when the types of jobs available are undesirable, women can easily become discouraged from participating in labour markets. Both more job creation and improving working conditions will be needed to brighten labour market prospects for women in the region.

6. East Asia

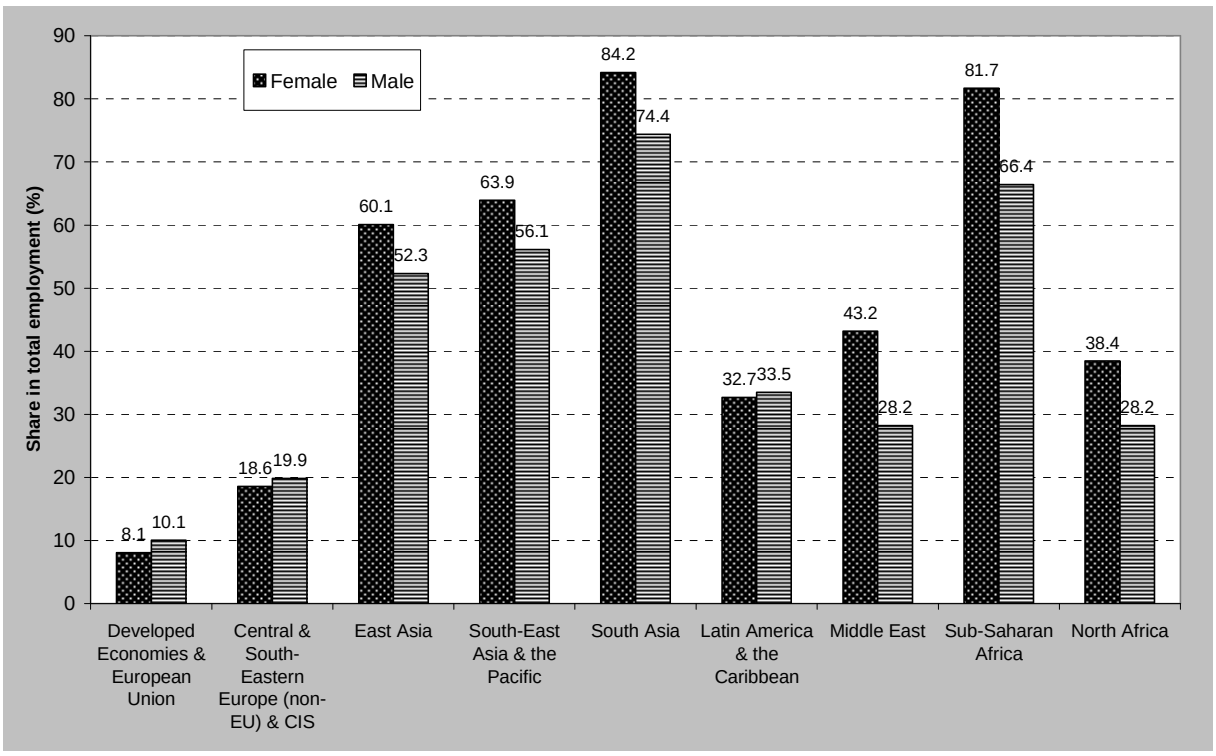
Employment opportunities for men and women abundant, but working conditions, social protection and social dialogue need improvement

The gender gap in economically active females per 100 males continues to be among the smallest in the world in East Asia. Per 100 active men there are 79 women participating in labour markets. (See table 2.) In addition, the female employment-to-population ratios remained the world's highest in 2007, with 65.2 per cent of all working-age women employed. (The ratio was 78.4 per cent for men.) (See table 4 and figure 1.) The female ratio continued a downward trend over the last ten years. Given that levels remain high, the declining trend does not reflect a threat to growth and development, as it might in other regions. On the contrary, this decrease brings the region closer to the levels in the developed economies where one can assume that women have the highest degree of freedom to choose whether they want to work or not. Also, the decrease is partly the result of increased educational participation. That more young women are opting to stay in school is reflected in the larger decrease in the female youth employment-to-population ratios in comparison to the total. (See table 4.) Nevertheless, the female youth employment-to-population ratio is still the highest in the world, at 64.5 per cent in 2007. Also unique to the region is the higher employment-to-population ratios for young women in comparison to young men.

The unemployment rate in the region continues to remain at low levels. Overall, it stood at 3.3 per cent in 2007, a level that could be considered full employment. The female rate is even lower at 2.7 per cent in comparison to 3.8 per cent for men. (See table 3 and figure 5.) Also, youth unemployment is the lowest in the world, at 5.8 per cent for young women and 7.9 per cent for young men in 2007, continuing a decreasing trend. Obviously, given the quick pace of economic growth in the region and the fact that slow labour force growth rates result in shortages in the supply of labour, finding employment is not difficult for either men or women in East Asia.

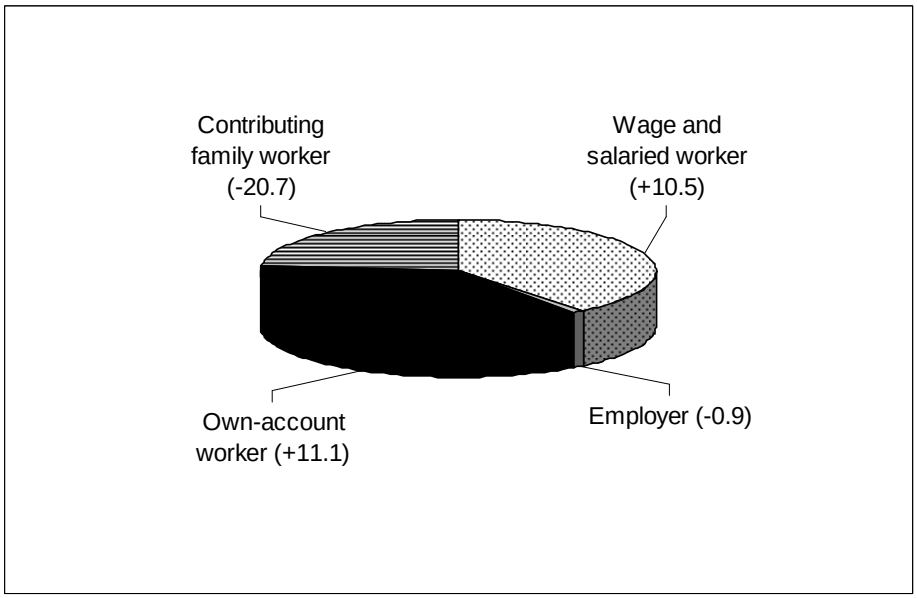
East Asians are quickly moving away from agriculture as the primary sector of employment and this is even truer for women than for men (although the female share continues to be higher at 41.0 per cent compared to men's 36.3 per cent). Women are moving to a large extent into the services sector, which has a female share of employment of 33.5 per cent, and to a lesser extent into the industry sector, where the female employment share is 25.5 per cent. There is very little difference in the sectoral shares between the sexes. (See table 5 and figure 3.)

Figure 8
Persons in vulnerable employment as percentage of total employment, by sex, 2007



Source: Annex table 6.

Figure 9
Distribution of female status in employment in East Asia, 2007
(percentage point change from 1997 in parentheses)



Source: Annex table 6.

The move out of agriculture was paralleled with a move away from vulnerable forms of employment, although still as many as 6 out of 10 workers in the region can be classified as vulnerable (60.1 per cent of female workers and 52.3 per cent of male workers). Nonetheless, the shares of employed persons in vulnerable employment situations are decreasing for both sexes.

(See table 6 and figure 8.) The share of female contributing family workers decreased by an impressive 20.7 percentage points. (See figure 9.) Unfortunately, not all women moved into wage and salaried work, but also into own-account work. The female share in this status group is quite high at 36.8 per cent; only in sub-Saharan Africa is the share higher. Still, the share of women in wage and salaried employment increased by an impressive 10.5 percentage points between 1997 and 2007 and now makes up as much as 39.2 per cent of female employment. The level for men in this group also increased and was 46.4 per cent in 2007.

In short, there are both positive and negative developments in terms of changing employment statuses in the region: there are shifts away from contributing family work, increasing shares of wage and salaried work, but also increasing shares of own-account work. Overall though, vulnerable employment is decreasing and this is undecidedly a positive development for the region's workers, regardless of their sex.

Economic prospects for the region are good and some benefits of economic growth are filtering down to workers, as is evident by low unemployment rates and the decreasing share of vulnerable employment. However, there is still room for improvement. The majority of work is vulnerable and the vulnerable employment share for women is higher than for men. Also, if one were to look at other decent work components – those not measurable at the regional and global level – working conditions could be called into question. Average working hours are longer than in other regions and exceed 50 hours per week in some countries; safety and health at work, as well as rights at work have not progressed significantly; and, social dialogue between workers, employers and governments is far from being implemented everywhere.[15] We do not know whether women suffer more than men when it comes to the quality of employment. But, given that in this region, as throughout the world, family responsibilities are often still mainly a feminine domain, long working hours and other non-decent characteristics of employment can be particularly burdensome to women as they try to find a balance between family and working life.

7. South-East Asia & the Pacific

Women moving into wage and salaried jobs – but slowly

In South-East Asia & the Pacific 59.1 per cent of working-age women participate in the labour market compared to 82.8 per cent of men. The resulting gender gap in economic activity is 73 active women per 100 active men, which is smaller than the world average. (See table 2.)

Female employment-to-population ratios in the region remained almost constant over the last ten years (at 55.1 per cent). This is the third highest employment-to-population ratio for women after East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. (See table 4 and figure 1.) Whereas the adult employment-to-population ratio for women increased, the youth employment-to-population ratio decreased considerably by almost 5 percentage points to 40.3 per cent. This was mainly the result of more young women entering and staying longer in the education system. Employment-to population ratios in the region are much lower for women than for men – 72 women work for every 100 men – but the difference is not as large as in other regions at the same level of development.

The overall unemployment rates in the region are comparably low and have stabilized in recent years. However, there is a worrisome trend of increasing unemployment rates for women. In 2007, unemployment rates were 6.9 per cent for women compared to 5.6 per cent for men. (See table 3 and figure 5.) Ten years earlier the female rate was 4.2 per cent and only 0.3 percentage points different from the male rate of 3.9 per cent. Whereas the total number of unemployed men increased by 78 per cent over the ten-year period, the total number of unemployed women

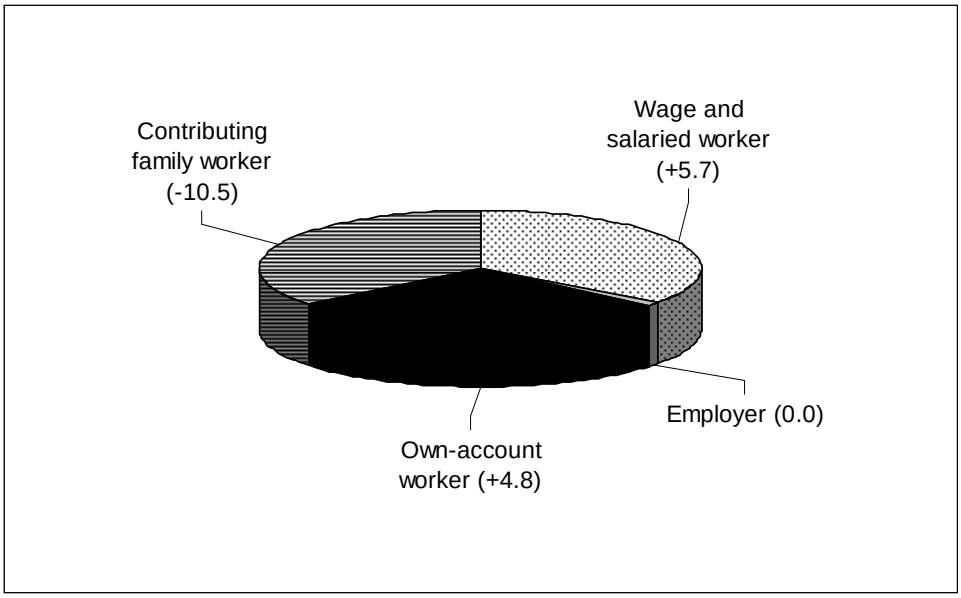
[15] ILO, *Labour and social trends in Asia and the Pacific 2007* (Bangkok, 2007); www.ilo.org/public/english/region/asro/bangkok/library/download/pub07-04.pdf.

increased by 111 per cent. The increase of the female unemployment rate goes against the trend of declining rates for women in most other regions. And, whereas the upward trend came to a halt for men, women's rates have continued their increase over the ten-year period. What is happening is that some countries in the region are providing fewer and fewer opportunities for young people. Indonesia, which dominates the region in terms of population, showed an astonishing increase of 17 percentage points in the unemployment rate of young women between 1996 and 2006 (from 17.0 to 33.9 per cent).[16] Of all countries with available data, this represents the largest increase. The increase was higher for young women than for young men (the male youth unemployment rate saw a 13 percentage point increase). However, employment prospects for young Indonesian men were only slightly better than that of young women. The male youth unemployment rate in 2006 was also extremely high at 27.1 per cent.

Overall, the move of employment away from the agriculture sector is slower than in other regions in Asia, but as the result of a sizeable move of women out of agriculture in recent years, the employment shares in this sector are now almost equal between the sexes: in 2007, the male share stood at 44.3 per cent and the female share was 43.4 per cent. (See table 5 and figure 3.) Overall, only 19 per cent of all employed people work in industry, with a share considerably lower for women (16.3 per cent) than for men (21 per cent). The overall increase in employment in the services sector was driven by female trends. The female employment share increased by 4.5 percentage points to stand at 40.3 per cent in 2007. The male share in services increased by only 1.7 percentage points to 34.7 per cent.

The shift in terms of status of employment is slightly more impressive than the sectoral moves, especially the move of women out of the status group of contributing family workers. The share of this group in total female employment decreased by 10.5 percentage points to a level of 36.0 per cent in 2007. (See table 6 and figure 10.) Nevertheless, the region maintains the second highest share in the world of women engaged in employment as contributing family workers (after South Asia).

Figure 10
Distribution of female status in employment in South-East Asia & the Pacific, 2007
(percentage point change from 1997 in parentheses)



Source: Annex table 6.

[16] ILO, *Key indicators of the labour market, op.cit.*, table 9.

It seems that some former female contributing family workers moved into own-account work, which can also be precarious although for different reasons. But, on the positive side, there has been an even larger gain in the status of wage and salaried work; there the female share increased by 5.7 percentage points between 1997 and 2007 (from 29.4 to 35.1 per cent). Movements in men's status shares have been less sizeable, but going in the right direction (increasing shares in wage and salaried work and decreasing shares in vulnerable employment). Overall, the share in vulnerable employment decreased by almost 6 percentage points for women and 3 for men. In 2007, out of 10 working women slightly more than 6 (6.4) were engaged in vulnerable employment. Vulnerable employment for both women and men continued to be the third highest in the world after only South Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. (See table 6 and figure 8.)

Overall, gender inequality in the region is less of a challenge than in other developing regions, but there are some developments that need to be carefully watched, especially the fact that women's unemployment rates are increasing at a faster rate than men's and that women mainly move into jobs in the services sector, a sector where the gap between high- and low-productivity employment is quite significant. Policies can help to protect women from situations of occupational segregation that leave them with only the low-paid, low-productivity jobs in the services sector. In addition, the continuing high shares in vulnerable employment should not be ignored, and even though the gender gap there is narrowing, the trend should be monitored in the future to see whether or not this continues. Finally, there is a continued need to focus on improving productivity in the region through education and skills development, which should help to ensure that newly created jobs allow both women and men to improve their chances of escaping and/or staying out of poverty.

8. South Asia

Untapped female potential and sizeable decent work deficit

Women continue to be an untapped potential in the region of South Asia. Overall labour force participation rates within the region have traditionally been low due to the low rates for women. Compared to 100 men active on labour markets only 42 women participate by either working or looking for work. (See table 2.)

The low participation is also reflected in the employment-to-population ratios: in 2007, only 3.4 out of 10 women of working-age actually worked (34.1 per cent), and over the last ten years the female employment-to-population ratio slightly decreased. (See table 4 and figure 1.) The decrease was led by a considerable downward trend in female youth employment. Fortunately, this is mostly the result of more young women participating in education, although the gender gap in access to education in some countries in the region is still large.[17] If education gaps between men and women persist it could lead to even more constraints for women in the future as they would face discrimination in attaining decent jobs based not just on their sex, but also on their relative lack of skills. In 2007, the employment-to-population ratio for young women was 26.2 per cent compared to 57.2 per cent for young men.

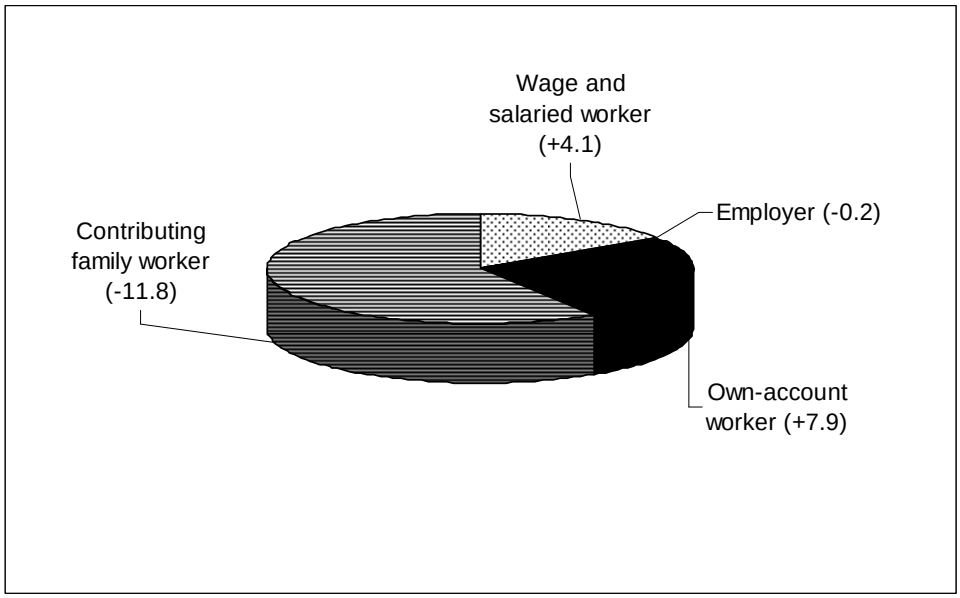
The difficult labour market situation of women compared to men is also reflected in their higher risk of being unemployed if they are economically active. The female unemployment rate in 2007 was 5.8 per cent compared to 4.8 per cent for men. (See table 3 and figure 5.) Fortunately, these rates are rather low compared with other regions and the concern that they might increase over time have, so far, not materialized.

[17] See for example, Oxfam, "9 girls' education in South Asia", Education and gender equality series, Programme Insights, Oxfam GB, February 2006; www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/issues/education/downloads/edpaper9.pdf and UNICEF, *Gender achievements and prospects in education: The gap report* (New York, 2005); www.ungei.org/gap/index.php.

South Asian countries are still different from the rest of Asia in that their economies strongly depend on agriculture and, therefore, on weather conditions and the demand for agricultural products. The agricultural sector accounts for almost half of total employment (overall, 48 per cent of employment is in the agricultural sector), which is more than in any other region except sub-Saharan Africa. Women's employment share in agriculture is much higher than men's (60.5 per cent in 2007 compared to 42.9 per cent for men). (See table 5 and figure 3.) However, no other region in the world has seen as fast a decrease of agricultural employment as South Asia; over the last ten years, the share decreased by 13.6 percentage points for women and 10.6 for men.

Where did the jobs go? Surprisingly, given the large amount of attention paid to outsourcing of services sector jobs to India, it was the industrial sector that saw the biggest increase in its job share in the region: in 1997, 15.3 per cent of all jobs were found in this sector, while in 2007 the share was 21.7 per cent. And in terms of percentage points, the growth of employment in the industry sector was even bigger for women. Their share increased by 7.2 percentage points in comparison with 6.0 percentage points for men. The changes in this sector for both sexes are the most significant of all regions. The industry employment shares now stand at 18.4 per cent for women and 23.0 per cent for men and the male-female gap in this sector is now the second lowest in the world. In contrast, the share of employment in the services sector is growing at a slower pace than in most other regions; it increased by 6.3 percentage points for women and 4.6 percentage points for men between 1997 and 2007.

Figure 11
Distribution of female status in employment in South Asia, 2007
(percentage point change from 1997 in parentheses)



Source: Annex table 6.

Has the remarkable shift in sectoral employment shares been reflected in decreasing vulnerable employment in the region? Unfortunately, this has not been the case. The vulnerable employment shares of both men and women remained the highest in the world. And, even though the vulnerable employment share for women decreased by slightly more than for men (3.9 percentage points for women and 2.4 percentage points for men), women continue to carry a higher risk of finding themselves in a vulnerable employment situation: more than 8 out of 10 working women compared to more than 7 out of 10 working men are vulnerable. (See table 6 and figure 8.) An interesting development within the vulnerable employment sub-categories is that women are shifting out of contributing family work; however, it appears that the majority move into own-account work and not so much into wage and salaried work. This means that these

women move from one vulnerable group into another, only slightly increasing their chance for economic independence. (See figure 11.)

For the time being South Asia still has an enormous deficit in decent work; too many people in vulnerable employment situations and still 80 per cent of all working people living with their families in poverty on US$2 a day. But, there are hopeful signs: people are moving out of the agricultural sector to work in more productive sectors, unemployment remains at low levels and productivity growth is leading to levels that may soon be sufficiently high to increase earnings of more workers to above the poverty threshold.

But do women profit from these positive trends? Those participating in labour markets do, but all those who remain outside the labour market, and this is the majority of the female population (63.8 per cent), may not benefit directly. Many women in the region continue their dependence on the male breadwinner, are still too often excluded from education systems and are trapped in situations where lack of labour market access does not allow them to move beyond their traditional role. One last figure should help illustrate the challenge: in South Asia there are 511 million women who are of working age and 540 million men, but only 174 million women have a job compared to 422 million men.

9. Central & South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) & CIS

Aspects of gender equality declining

Whereas the first years after the transition were characterized by large decreases in labour force participation rates as well as employment-to-population ratios both for women and men in the region, the improved economic performance in recent years seems to have finally brought an end to the downward trends. The interesting question now is whether the historically high equality in labour markets will be reflected in current labour market indicators, or whether inequality has increased with the opening of market economies.

Approximately 80 women are economically active per 100 men and this ratio has not changed over the last ten years. This is the second smallest gap after the Developed Economies & EU. (See table 2.) Nor have there been significant changes over time in the gap between male and female employment-to-population ratios. The difference remains around 18 percentage points, with the female ratio at 45.6 per cent and the male ratio at 63.8 per cent in 2007. (See table 4 and figure 1.) Right after the beginning of the transition process in 1991, the gender gap in employment-to-population ratios was slightly higher, with a difference of more than 20 percentage points. Therefore, for the overall rates of participation and employment there is, so far, no indication of increasing inequality.

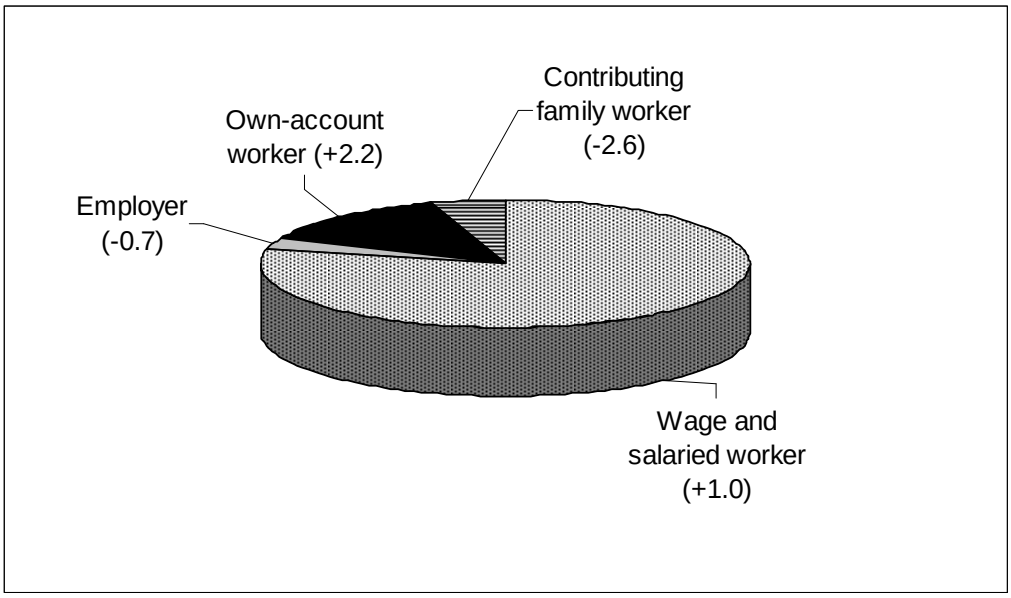
Employment-to-population ratios for young people also seem to have reached a turning point and are showing an upward trend in recent years, although the level remains low at 36.0 per cent. This is the third lowest employment ratio for young people in the world (after North Africa and the Middle East). But, unlike the latter two regions, the low ratios are not the result of non-economic barriers (social aspects, etc.) against the economic participation of women. In the case of Central & South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) & CIS, barriers to economic participation for young people, male and female, are more economic in nature. In this region, unemployment is quite high for both youth and adults. This means employers have a large pool of jobseekers to call upon, and it is the older jobseekers with some years of work experience who are likely to be employed first. Many young people, recognizing their chances of finding work are slim, become discouraged and fall outside of the labour market. The female youth employment-to-population ratio was low at 29.8 per cent in 2007 and the rate for young men was 42.0 per cent. (See table 4.) The gap between employment ratios of young women and young men has increased by more than 2 percentage

points within ten years, which should be seen as a first warning sign for increasing gender disparities in the future.

Unemployment rates in the region continue to remain above the global average. In 2007, the male unemployment rate of 8.7 per cent exceeded that of females (8.3 per cent). (See table 3 and figure 5.) Interestingly enough, the youth unemployment rates showed an opposite picture, with a higher rate for young women (17.9 per cent) than for young men (16.9 per cent). Again, this should be seen as a warning sign that gender equality in labour markets has started to deteriorate.

Even in many of the agriculture-oriented economies within the region, both male and female workers are moving quickly out of this sector. The regional share of workers in this sector decreased by 7.7 percentage points for women and 7.2 percentage points for men between 1997 and 2007. There were 19.2 per cent of women workers and 19.8 per cent of male workers engaged in agriculture in the latter year. (See table 5 and figure 3.) The share of people employed in industry also decreased over the ten-year period and this was almost completely driven by the move of women out of the sector: their share decreased by 4.3 percentage points to 17.9 per cent, whereas the male share stayed more or less constant at 32.6 per cent. As the only increasing sector in terms of employment shares, it is evident that it was the services sector that absorbed the majority of new workers, as well as some workers who moved out of agriculture and industry (others from these sectors would have flowed into unemployment). The share of female employment in services increased by 12 percentage points to 62.8 per cent while the male share grew by 7.8 percentage points to 47.6 per cent. For both sexes, this represents the highest sectoral increase of all the regions.

Figure 12
Distribution of female status in employment in Central & South-Eastern Europe & CIS, 2007
(percentage point change from 1997 in parentheses)



Source: Annex table 6.

Status in employment shares have changed little between 1997 and 2007 for both men and women. The biggest shift was that of women out of contributing family work, but with a decrease of only 2.6 percentage points over ten years even that change is minimal. (See figure 12.) As a result of these slow movements, vulnerable employment in the region decreased by only 0.8 percentage points and stood at 18.6 per cent for women and 19.9 per cent for men. (See table 6 and figure 8.) Both shares are low in comparison to other regions. The fact that women have a lower share than men is, of course, favourable for women, but their advantage was even bigger ten

years ago and has started to decline more recently. Given that only 2 out of 10 people face vulnerable employment situations – the second lowest share in the world after the Developed Economies & EU – it is clear that vulnerable employment is not so much of an issue in the region.

Historically, gender equality was a major characteristic in the region and some indicators still confirm signs of this trend. As discussed in last year's *Global employment trends for women*,[18] there was greater wage equality in the planned economies of this region than in industrialized or developing economies. Also, unemployment rates are lower for women than for men, as are the share of those working in vulnerable employment. Nevertheless, labour market indicators for young women are less favourable than for men and that does not bode well for the future of gender equality in the world of work.

10. Developed Economies & European Union

Female employment gains prominent but inequality in workplace responsibilities and decision-making continue

In terms of economic activity, 82 women per 100 men in the region of the Developed Economies & European Union were participating in the labour market in 2007. (See table 2.) This represents the smallest gap worldwide. Also, employment-to-population ratios of women have changed considerably in the last ten years, moving up from 47.2 per cent in 1997 to 49.1 per cent in 2007. (See table 4 and figure 1.) In contrast, male employment-to-population ratios decreased from 65.9 to 64.0 per cent. The statistics reflect the fact that employment creation was dominated by the increase in the number of jobs for women: employment grew by 12 per cent for women and by only 4.9 per cent for men between 1997 and 2007. At the same time, unemployment continues to be higher for women than for men with rates of 6.7 and 6.2 per cent, respectively. (See table 3 and figure 5.) Both rates are lower than ten years ago.

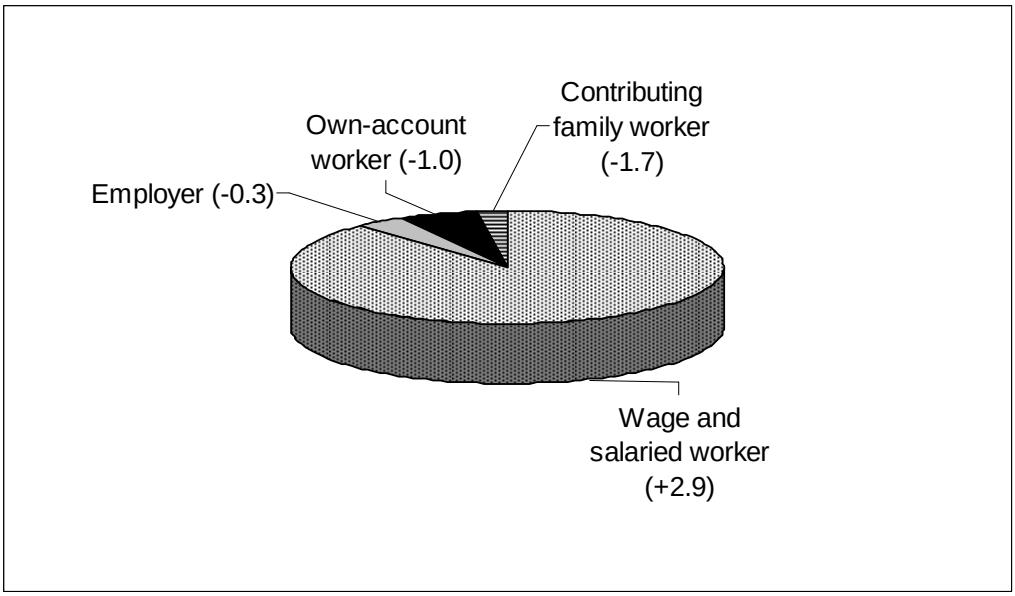
The overall picture for young people looks different. First of all, the employment-to-population ratios do not show as large a gap as the overall ratios: young women's employment-to-population ratio stood at 42.8 per cent, 0.6 percentage points higher than ten years ago, whereas the rate of young men was 45.6 per cent after a considerable decrease of 2.4 percentage points between 1997 and 2007. At the same time, a young person's risk of being unemployed continues to be 2.4 times higher than an adult's, although the risk for young women is smaller than that for young men (youth unemployment rates are 12.5 per cent for women and 13.8 per cent for men).

The move out of industry and into services continues in the region with a larger share of women leaving the sector than men. Even though the employment share in industry was already much lower for women than for men, it further decreased by 4.2 percentage points to a share of 12.5 per cent. (See table 5 and figure 3.) At the same time, employment of women in services increased to a share of 84.3 per cent. Men's industry share decreased to 34.3 per cent and the services sector share was 61.1 per cent in 2007.

Regarding status of employment, 88 per cent of all working women have gained access to a wage and salaried job, 3.9 per cent are employers, 5.8 per cent are own-account workers and 2.3 per cent are contributing family workers. (See table 6 and figure 13.) For men the shares are 82.1 per cent in wage and salaried jobs, 7.9 per cent employers, 9.3 per cent own-account workers and 0.8 per cent contributing family workers. The difference in the share of employers of men and women is particularly interesting, indicating that many more men are able and/or willing to carry the risks involved in engaging in self-employment with responsibility for employees. All status groups, with the exception of the wage and salaried group, have decreased their employment shares over time.

[18] The report can be downloaded in English, French or Spanish from www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/strat/global07.htm.

Figure 13
Distribution of female status in employment in Developed Economies & European Union, 2007
(percentage point change from 1997 in parentheses)



Source: Annex table 6.

Labour market analysis for the region of the Developed Economies & European Union will inevitably differ in comparison with the less developed regions in terms of the levels, trends and even significance of labour market indicators. The same is true for gender analysis. In this unique region, labour markets are well-defined and well-functioning in bringing together the supply and demand of labour. A broader array of labour market indicators is available in this region providing information on where inefficiencies in labour markets exist and where intervention is necessary to aid those whom the market itself cannot.[19] There is more information available in this region on, for example, the working conditions of women and participation in decision making in the world of work. That is why the authors of this report are able to discuss indicators such as pay gaps in this region and not in others.

The European Commission recently published findings showing that the pay gap between men and women has remained virtually unchanged at 15 per cent across all sectors in recent years and has narrowed by only one percentage point since 2000 in the EU.[20] Regarding wage gaps in the United States, several studies of the National Committee on Pay Equity show that wage gaps also continue to exist there.[21] As one of the main reasons for a stubborn pay gap, it is stated that women continue to be disproportionately employed in sectors where wages/earnings are lower and have been declining. (While the data is not available to support or refute gender pay gaps in other regions, the reason would certainly also apply to explain the existence of pay gaps worldwide.) Some evidence does exist to show that, at least in larger cities in the United States, wage equality has strengthened between well-educated men and women in certain high-skilled occupations.[22]

[19] The consistent investment in national statistical offices in the region means that reliable labour market statistics are produced on at least an annual basis.
[20] European Commission, "Equality between women and men - 2008" (Brussels, 2008); http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/gender_equality/docs/com_2008_0010_en.pdf.
[21] See the website of the National Committee on Pay Equity at www.pay-equity.org/.
[22] See, for example, "Young women earn more than men in big U.S. cities", Reuters, 3 August 2007; www.reuters.com/article/domesticNews/idUSN0334472920070803.

Another recently published study from the EU Commission[23] asserts that women account for just over 44 per cent of all workers, but they are more likely to be employed in junior positions. Women make up only 32 per cent of those considered as heads of businesses (chief executives, directors and managers of small businesses) in the EU (and keep in mind that the proportion is likely to be much less in all other regions). The under-representation of women at the top level is heightened in big business where men account for nearly 90 per cent of the board members of leading companies.

When it comes to participating in decision-making, the region saw improvements in the past and is leading when internationally compared. The same study states that the EU performs better than average in terms of female participation in government. The proportion of female members of parliament (single/lower house) rose from 16 per cent in 1997 to 24 per cent in 2007, though this is still well below the so-called critical mass of 30 per cent, deemed to be the minimum necessary for women to exert a meaningful influence on politics.

Besides the possibility of a slowdown in economic growth in 2008, the region faces other challenges: given the ageing of the population, there is a strong need to get more people – and especially women – into paid employment if governments are to secure living standards and maintain welfare systems. With only just more than 5 out of 10 women actively participating in labour markets, there is still an untapped potential that could, with the right policies in place, be better used. This can be done by moving away from policies that discourage people from working and companies from hiring, and by doing more to raise workers' skills. But no matter what measures are taken, they will only work if, in addition, conditions are set so that women are able to combine work and family life.

In summary, women in the Developed Economies & European Union, at least theoretically, have the same chance as men to participate in labour markets; however, there is still room for progress on matters such as equal pay, promotion and an increased facility to combine work and family live. It will be interesting to observe what will happen in the near future when growth and job creation are expected to slow down. Will women be the first to be pushed out of the labour market, as has happened during past periods of economic slowdown, or will men's employment be more negatively impacted?

[23] European Commission. "Women and men in decision-making 2007. Analysis of the situation and trends" (Brussels, 2008); http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/gender_equality/gender_mainstreaming/balancedparticipation/report_trends_final_2007_en.pdf.

Annex 1. World and regional tables

The source of all tables in this report is ILO, Global Employment Trends Model, November 2007. The ILO Employment Trends Unit has designed, and actively maintains, three econometric models which are used to produce estimates of labour market indicators in the countries and years for which country-reported data are unavailable. The Global Employment Trends Model (GET Model) is used to produce estimates – disaggregated by age and sex as appropriate – of unemployment, employment-to-population ratios, status in employment, employment by sector, labour productivity and employment elasticities. Alternative econometric models are used to produce world and regional estimates of labour force participation and working poverty. The models use multivariate regression techniques to impute missing values at the country level, and are thus unique in giving the ILO the ability to produce regional labour market information for all regions in the world. For more information on the methodology of producing world and regional estimates, see www.ilo.org/trends.

Differences from estimates shown in past Global Employment Trends reports are due to revisions of the IMF and World Bank estimates of GDP and its components, which are used in the models, as well as to revisions in the labour market information used. The country-level input comes from ILO, *Key indicators of the labour market, 5th Edition* (Geneva, 2007).

* 2007 data are preliminary.

Table 1
Global labour market indicators, 1997 and 2007

	Female		Male		Total	
	1997	2007*	1997	2007*	1997	2007*
Labour force (millions)	1'071.7	1'267.7	1'625.0	1'895.3	2'696.7	3'163.0
Employment (millions)	1'001.6	1'186.1	1'530.3	1'787.0	2'531.9	2'973.1
Unemployment (millions)	70.2	81.6	94.6	108.3	164.8	189.9
Labour force participation rate (%)	52.9	52.5	80.4	78.8	66.7	65.6
Employment-to-population ratio (%)	49.5	49.1	75.7	74.3	62.6	61.7
Unemployment rate (%)	6.5	6.4	5.8	5.7	6.1	6.0

Table 2
Male and female labour force participation rates, 1997 and 2007, and the gender gap in economically active females per 100 males, 2007

	Female LFPR (%)		Male LFPR (%)		Number of economically active females per 100 economically active males
	1997	2007*	1997	2007*	2007*
WORLD	52.9	52.5	80.4	78.8	66.9
Developed Economies & European Union	51.3	52.7	70.8	68.2	82.0
Central & South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) & CIS	50.7	49.7	70.9	69.8	80.5
East Asia	70.9	67.1	84.5	81.4	78.9
South-East Asia & the Pacific	57.4	59.1	82.8	82.8	73.2
South Asia	36.6	36.2	83.8	82.0	41.7
Latin America & the Caribbean	47.2	52.9	81.8	79.1	70.5
Middle East	25.6	33.3	77.5	78.3	38.7
Sub-Saharan Africa	64.1	62.6	87.4	86.1	75.0
North Africa	23.8	26.1	75.5	75.9	34.8

Table 3

Male and female unemployment rates, total and youth, 1997 and 2007

	Unemployment rate (%)							
	Female total		Male total		Female youth		Male youth	
	1997	2007*	1997	2007*	1997	2007*	1997	2007*
World	6.5	6.4	5.8	5.7	12.3	12.5	12.0	12.2
Developed Economies & European Union	8.1	6.7	6.9	6.2	15.0	12.5	14.4	13.8
Central & South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) & CIS	10.9	8.3	10.6	8.7	21.4	17.9	19.8	16.9
East Asia	3.1	2.7	4.2	3.8	6.3	5.8	8.7	7.9
South-East Asia & the Pacific	4.2	6.9	3.9	5.6	10.2	16.7	9.8	16.0
South Asia	5.3	5.8	4.4	4.8	10.9	9.9	9.9	9.8
Latin America & the Caribbean	10.7	10.9	6.3	6.9	19.3	21.6	11.9	14.0
Middle East	18.6	15.6	11.3	10.3	33.5	29.5	23.4	21.1
Sub-Saharan Africa	9.6	9.1	7.7	7.5	14.9	13.9	14.5	13.6
North Africa	16.5	16.2	10.1	9.0	30.3	32.3	22.2	21.2

Table 4

Male and female employment-to-population ratios, total and youth, 1997 and 2007

	Employment-to-population ratio (%)							
	Female total		Male total		Female youth		Male youth	
	1997	2007*	1997	2007*	1997	2007*	1997	2007*
World	49.5	49.1	75.7	74.3	42.5	40.1	58.3	55.1
Developed Economies & European Union	47.2	49.1	65.9	64.0	42.1	42.8	48.0	45.6
Central & South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) & CIS	45.2	45.6	63.4	63.8	30.9	29.8	41.0	42.0
East Asia	68.7	65.2	80.9	78.4	69.8	64.5	66.8	61.6
South-East Asia & the Pacific	55.0	55.1	79.6	78.1	45.0	40.3	58.5	53.7
South Asia	34.7	34.1	80.1	78.1	27.4	26.2	60.2	57.2
Latin America & the Caribbean	42.1	47.1	76.6	73.7	34.3	35.3	60.9	53.4
Middle East	20.8	28.1	68.7	70.3	15.3	19.5	42.3	44.3
Sub-Saharan Africa	58.0	56.9	80.6	79.7	50.4	49.0	64.8	63.5
North Africa	19.9	21.9	67.8	69.1	15.4	14.7	42.1	39.8

Table 5

Male and female employment by sector (as share of total employment), 1997 and 2007

	Employment in agriculture (%)		Employment in industry (%)		Employment in services (%)	
Female	**1997**	**2007***	**1997**	**2007***	**1997**	**2007***
World	43.5	36.1	16.8	17.6	39.6	46.3
Developed Economies & European Union	5.3	3.2	16.7	12.5	78.1	84.3
Central & South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) & CIS	26.9	19.2	22.2	17.9	50.8	62.8
East Asia	51.9	41.0	22.8	25.5	25.3	33.5
South-East Asia & the Pacific	50.3	43.4	13.9	16.3	35.8	40.3
South Asia	74.0	60.5	11.2	18.4	14.7	21.1
Latin America & the Caribbean	14.6	10.7	13.6	14.5	71.9	74.8
Middle East	28.4	31.0	20.0	18.8	51.6	50.2
Sub-Saharan Africa	74.8	67.9	5.9	5.8	19.2	26.4
North Africa	31.2	32.6	19.1	15.2	49.7	52.2
Male	**1997**	**2007***	**1997**	**2007***	**1997**	**2007***
World	40.0	34.0	24.0	25.6	36.1	40.4
Developed Economies & European Union	6.7	4.6	37.1	34.3	56.1	61.1
Central & South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) & CIS	27.0	19.8	33.2	32.6	39.8	47.6
East Asia	44.6	36.3	25.6	28.0	29.8	35.7
South-East Asia & the Pacific	47.7	44.3	19.4	21.0	32.9	34.7
South Asia	53.5	42.9	17.0	23.0	29.5	34.1
Latin America & the Caribbean	28.6	24.7	24.8	27.1	46.5	48.2
Middle East	19.6	12.5	27.2	28.0	53.3	59.4
Sub-Saharan Africa	70.0	62.4	10.4	12.4	19.6	25.2
North Africa	36.6	32.9	20.1	22.3	43.3	44.8

Table 6
Male and female status in employment (as share of total employment), 1997 and 2007

	Wage and salaried workers (%)		Employers (%)		Own-account workers (%)		Contributing family workers (%)		Vulnerable employment (%)	
Female	**1997**	**2007***	**1997**	**2007***	**1997**	**2007***	**1997**	**2007***	**1997**	**2007***
WORLD	41.8	46.4	2.1	1.8	21.6	26.9	34.5	24.9	56.1	51.7
Developed Economies & European Union	85.1	88.0	4.2	3.9	6.8	5.8	4.0	2.3	10.7	8.1
Central & South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) & CIS	77.5	78.5	3.6	3.0	11.4	13.6	7.6	5.0	18.9	18.6
East Asia	28.7	39.2	1.6	0.7	25.7	36.8	44.0	23.3	69.6	60.1
South-East Asia & the Pacific	29.4	35.1	1.0	0.9	23.2	28.0	46.5	36.0	69.6	63.9
South Asia	11.4	15.5	0.5	0.3	17.4	25.2	70.7	58.9	88.1	84.2
Latin America & the Caribbean	67.8	64.6	2.1	2.7	21.7	25.5	8.4	7.1	30.1	32.7
Middle East	43.7	55.3	1.1	1.5	25.7	17.9	29.4	25.3	55.2	43.2
Sub-Saharan Africa	12.4	15.5	2.6	2.8	48.0	46.9	37.0	34.7	85.0	81.7
North Africa	49.3	58.4	2.2	3.2	16.2	12.4	32.3	26.0	48.4	38.4
Male	**1997**	**2007***	**1997**	**2007***	**1997**	**2007***	**1997**	**2007***	**1997**	**2007***
WORLD	44.9	47.9	4.3	3.4	37.2	37.4	13.5	11.3	50.7	48.7
Developed Economies & European Union	80.6	82.1	8.1	7.9	10.1	9.3	1.2	0.8	11.3	10.1
Central & South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) & CIS	74.7	76.1	4.2	4.1	17.5	17.7	3.6	2.1	21.0	19.9
East Asia	38.4	46.4	3.7	1.3	39.8	40.5	18.1	11.8	57.9	52.3
South-East Asia & the Pacific	38.1	41.6	2.9	2.3	43.3	41.5	15.7	14.6	58.9	56.1
South Asia	21.0	24.4	2.2	1.2	58.0	56.1	18.8	18.3	76.7	74.4
Latin America & the Caribbean	62.4	60.6	5.5	5.9	26.6	29.7	5.6	3.8	32.1	33.5
Middle East	58.7	65.2	5.8	6.7	28.1	23.0	7.4	5.2	35.5	28.2
Sub-Saharan Africa	25.2	30.3	3.4	3.2	49.6	48.0	21.8	18.4	71.4	66.4
North Africa	57.1	59.9	9.4	11.9	17.9	16.2	15.6	12.0	33.5	28.2

Annex 2. Global employment trends – regional groupings

Developed Economies & European Union

European Union

Austria
Belgium
Bulgaria
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Netherlands
Poland
Romania
Portugal
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
United Kingdom

North America

Canada
United States

Other Developed Economies

Australia
Gibraltar
Greenland
Isle of Man
Israel
Japan
New Zealand
San Marino
St. Pierre and Miquelon

Western Europe (non-EU)

Andora
Iceland
Liechtenstein
Monaco
Norway
Switzerland

Central & South-Eastern Europe (non-EU) & CIS

Central & South-Eastern Europe

Albania
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Croatia
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
Serbia and Montenegro
Turkey

Commonwealth of Independent States

Armenia
Azerbaijan
Belarus
Georgia
Kazakhstan
Kyrgyzstan
Republic of Moldova
Russian Federation
Tajikistan
Turkmenistan
Ukraine
Uzbekistan

East Asia

China
Hong Kong, China
Korea, Democratic People's Republic of
Korea, Republic of
Macau, China
Mongolia
Taiwan, China

South-East Asia & the Pacific

South-East Asia

Brunei Darussalam
Cambodia
East Timor
Indonesia
Lao People's Democratic Republic
Malaysia
Myanmar
Philippines
Singapore
Thailand
Viet Nam

Pacific Islands

American Samoa
Cook Islands
Fiji
French Polynesia
Guam
Kiribati
Marshall Islands
Nauru
New Caledonia
Niue
Northern Mariana Islands
Papua New Guinea
Samoa
Solomon Islands
Tokelau
Tonga
Tuvalu
Vanuatu
Wallis and Futuna Islands

South Asia

Afghanistan
Bangladesh
Bhutan
India
Maldives
Nepal
Pakistan
Sri Lanka

Latin America & the Caribbean

Caribbean

Anguilla
Antigua and Barbuda
Aruba
Bahamas
Barbados
Bermuda
British Virgin Islands
Cayman Islands
Cuba
Dominica
Dominican Republic
Grenada
Guadeloupe
Guyana
Haiti
Jamaica
Martinique
Montserrat
Netherlands Antilles
Puerto Rico
Saint Kitts and Nevis
Saint Lucia
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines
Suriname
Trinidad and Tobago
Turks and Caicos Islands
United States Virgin Islands

Central America

Belize
Costa Rica
El Salvador
Guatemala
Honduras
Mexico
Nicaragua
Panama

South America

Argentina
Bolivia
Brazil
Chile
Colombia
Ecuador
Falkland Islands (Malvinas)
French Guiana
Paraguay
Peru
Uruguay
Venezuela

North Africa

Algeria
Egypt
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya
Morocco
Sudan
Tunisia

Sub-Saharan Africa

Eastern Africa

Burundi
Comoros
Djibouti
Eritrea
Ethiopia
Kenya
Madagascar
Malawi
Mauritius
Mozambique
Réunion
Rwanda
Seychelles
Somalia
Tanzania, United Republic of
Uganda
Zambia
Zimbabwe

Middle Africa

Angola
Cameroon
Central African Republic
Chad
Congo
Congo, Democratic Republic of
Equatorial Guinea
Gabon
Sao Tome and Principe

Southern Africa

Botswana
Lesotho
Namibia
South Africa
Swaziland

Western Africa

Benin
Burkina Faso
Cape Verde
Côte d'Ivoire
Gambia
Ghana
Guinea
Guinea-Bissau
Liberia
Mali
Mauritania
Niger
Nigeria
Senegal
Sierra Leone
St. Helena
Togo

Middle East

Bahrain
Iran, Islamic Republic of
Iraq
Jordan
Kuwait
Lebanon
Oman
Qatar
Saudi Arabia
Syrian Arab Republic
United Arab Emirates
West Bank and Gaza Strip
Yemen

Annex 3. Glossary of labour market terms

Labour market statistics and the indicators generated from the statistics can cause a great deal of confusion and, therefore, misinterpretation among users. The following glossary of labour market concepts should serve to clarify much of the terminology used in this report.

Contributing family worker: an own-account worker who works without pay in an establishment operated by a related person living in the same household.

Currently active population: the best known measure of the economically active population, also known as the "labour force" (see definition below).

Discouraged worker: a person who is without work and available for work but did not seek work (and therefore could not be classified as "unemployed") because they felt that no work would be available to them. According to the standard classification system, the discouraged worker is counted among the inactive, although many analysts would like to see the number of discouraged workers added to the unemployed to give a broader measure of the unutilized supply of labour. "Discouraged" implies a sense of "giving up", meaning the discouraged worker has simply given up any hope of finding work for reasons such as they feel they lack the proper qualifications, they do not know where or how to look for work, or they feel that no suitable work is available. The discouraged worker, therefore, could be said to be "involuntarily" inactive.

Economically active population: all persons who supplied labour for the production of goods and services in a specified reference period; in other words, all those who undertook economic activity (also known as "market activities"), as defined by the 1993 UN System of National Accounts (SNA),[1] during the measured time frame. Often used interchangeably with "labour force" (see definition below).

Employed: a person who performed some work – for at least one hour during the specified reference period – for wage or salary (paid employment) or for profit or family gain (self-employment). A person is also considered employed if they have a job but was temporarily not at work during the reference period.

Employer: a self-employed person with employees.

Employment: a measure of the total number of employed persons.

Employment-to-population ratio: the number of employed persons as a percentage of the working-age population. This indicator measures the proportion of the population who could be working (the working-age population) who *are* working, and as such provides some information on the efficacy of the economy to create jobs.

Inactive: a person who is neither employed nor unemployed, or, equivalently, is not in the labour force.

Inactivity rate: the sum of all inactive persons as a percentage of the working-age population. As an inverse to the labour force participation rate, the inactivity rate serves as a measure of the relative size of the population who do *not* supply labour for the production of goods and services.

Job: a paid position of regular employment. According to the standard definition, therefore, only the wage and salaried workers could have a "job". Common usage, however, has extended the concept to encompass any work-related task, which means that any employed person, whether a paid employee or self-employed, could qualify as "with a job".

Labour force:[2] the sum of all persons above a specified age (the nationally defined "working age") who were either employed or unemployed over a specified short reference period; the labour force is the best known measure of the economically active population, and is also known as the "currently active

population". The labour force (employment + unemployment) + the economically inactive population = total working-age population of a country.

Labour force participation rate: the sum of persons in the labour force as a percentage of the working-age population. The indicator serves as a measure of the relative size of the labour supply available for the production of goods and services.

Labour market: the virtual (non-tangible) arena where workers compete for jobs and employers compete for workers. Analysts use labour market information, including statistics such as the employment-to-population ratio, the unemployment rate, etc., to make assessments of how well the labour market functions and how and/or why the supply of labour and the demand for labour do not meet at perfect equilibrium.

Own-account worker: a person who is self-employed with no employees working for them.

Unemployed: a person who, during the specified short reference period, was (a) without work, (b) currently available for work, and (c) seeking work. A person is also considered unemployed if they are not currently working but have made arrangements to take up paid or self-employment at a date subsequent to the reference period.

Unemployment: a measure of the total number of unemployed persons.

Unemployment rate: unemployment as a percentage of the total labour force (employment + unemployment). The indicator is widely used as a measure of unutilized labour supply.

Vulnerable employment: the sum of own-account workers and contributing family workers.

Wage and salaried worker: persons in paid employment jobs, where the incumbent holds an explicit or implicit contract and receives a basic remuneration which is not directly dependent on the revenue of the unit for which they work; also known as "employee".

Work: as a verb, a general term meaning to engage in "economic activity", or, equivalently, to supply labour as input in the production of goods and services; as a noun, "work" has come to be used interchangeably with "job" and "employment" – for example, a person who supplies labour might say they "have work" or "have a job" or even "have employment".

Working: an informal synonym for "employed".

[1] See website http://unstats.un.org/unsd/sna1993/introduction.asp for additional information on the SNA and the guidelines for determining economic activity.

[2] The international standard that serves to guide statisticians in the definition of the economically active population and its categories is the Resolution concerning statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment, adopted by the 13th International Conference of Labour Statisticians, October 1982; www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/stat/download/res/ecacpop.pdf.