



Commission on the Status of Women

The Informal Work Sector

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Policy Dilemma

For women globally, the informal work sector represents an essential avenue for economic participation, especially in regions with limited formal employment opportunities. For many women, the informal sector offers a means of generating income and supporting their families when formal employment options are scarce or inaccessible due to various barriers such as gender discrimination, lack of education, or caregiving responsibilities. Women's participation in informal work spans across various activities, from street vending and domestic work to craft production.¹ Despite often operating in harrowing conditions with low wages and little to no social protections, the informal sector provides a critical source of livelihood for countless women, empowering them with a degree of economic autonomy and contributing significantly to household income and community resilience.

Working women in the informal economy face various challenges, including lower wages, lack of social protection, and potential violations of labor rights. Balancing informal work with unpaid care responsibilities adds to their burden, while limited access to education and training constrains their opportunities for advancement. Entrepreneurial endeavors are hindered by barriers such as limited access to credit, and women in the informal economy are highly susceptible to economic shocks, potentially exacerbating existing inequalities and pushing them further into poverty. Employers often engage in informal employment to reduce labor costs and access flexible labor pools, exploiting the vulnerability of informal workers while resisting formalization to maintain autonomy and flexibility.²

The tenets of a nation's informal economy, especially as it relates to women, see shifts in causes and consequences on a regional basis. From formalizing economies to

providing relief for informal workers affected by the recent COVID-19 pandemic, national governments have taken steps to alleviate the struggles seen by their informal workers.³ The addition of new tax structures and programs that provide microinsurance to informal workers have also been implemented internationally.⁴ Governments recognize the economic significance of the informal sector but face challenges in regulating it due to its decentralized nature. They may intervene to extend social protection coverage, promote decent work standards, and facilitate transitions to formal employment, reflecting broader public interests in economic development and social welfare. However, many nations still struggle with shifting their economic structures to include informal workers within their social protection programs.

Gender roles often confine women to primary caregiving responsibilities, limiting their access to formal employment opportunities and perpetuating cultural biases against women entering certain professions. The childcare crisis, exacerbated by the pandemic, leaves working parents, particularly mothers, struggling to find adequate childcare while working, further hindering women's participation in the formal workforce.⁵ Educational limitations push many women towards informal work as the most accessible form of employment, despite its limited opportunities for skill development and career advancement, perpetuating a cycle of educational disadvantage. Economic inequalities, including limited access to financial resources and property ownership, push women towards informal work, which offers flexibility but lacks opportunities for professional growth. While informal work may provide immediate financial relief, it can also increase women's economic vulnerability and perpetuate gender disparities in the workforce.

Chronology

2005: International Labor Organization's Strategies and Tools against social Exclusion and Poverty

Launched and implemented in the early 2000s, the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Strategies and Tools against social Exclusion and Poverty (STEP) program aims to combat social exclusion and poverty through various strategies and tools. In the context of the global labor market, the program's purpose is to encourage inclusive growth and development by promoting social protections to be implemented in sectors such as the informal economy.⁶ In 2005, with funding from the Norwegian government, a smaller project called "Extending Social Protection through Health Micro-Insurance Schemes to Women in the Informal Economy" was implemented by the ILO in Nepal and the Philippines. With this project, all involved parties aimed to provide long-term benefits to marginalized groups in target areas where most citizens were informal workers. They worked to establish small-scale health insurance programs through collaboration with farmers' cooperatives and workers' associations. ILO-STEP leveraged existing social capital, and integrated services, and helped with gender mainstreaming throughout this process.⁷ By working in conjunction with the Local Governance Unit of their targeted region, STEP was able to integrate its small-scale insurance provision into the national insurance structure. This program emphasized the importance of extending feasible social protections to excluded populations within the informal economy, thereby contributing to a more equitable social protection system within the nation.⁸

The establishment of micro-insurance schemes for women in the informal sector is crucial for addressing their immediate health needs without facing financial burdens, which can often push families deeper into poverty. Access to healthcare empowers women by giving them the ability to make informed decisions for themselves and their families.⁹ Aside from the application of the STEP program for women's healthcare access,

STEP also focuses on capacity building and skill development, which enhances their economic participation and provides a knowledge base for navigating formal economic systems, like health insurance platforms, effectively.¹⁰

2016: Promoting R2O4 in Malawi

Since 2016, the Law Program and Organization and Representation Program of Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) has partnered with the Malawi Union for the Informal Sector (MUFIS) to advocate for the implementation of R204. R204 is the ILO Recommendation that concerns the transition from an informal to a formal economy. The recommendation outlined a multitude of factors that should be considered while attempting to formalize informal sectors, create decent formal jobs, and prevent the informalization of current formal work sectors.¹¹ The implementation of this recommendation within Malawi was supported by both organizations due to the nation's unique allowance for informal workers to register trade unions, with MUFIS having a workers' representative seat on Malawi's Tripartite Labour Advisory Council.¹² Within Malawi, the focus of collaboration was on street vendors who constitute a large portion of MUFIS membership. Through the provided representation of informal workers in this sector, street vendors have been able to express their grievances, and outline demands for what they would like to improve regarding their working conditions.¹³

The partnership between WIEGO and MUFIS aims to enhance the abilities of MUFIS leaders in their collective bargaining and negotiations with national and local authorities. Their strategy employs three key areas of analysis and action: laws and policies affecting informal workers, informal economy budget analysis, and childcare. From enabling informal workers to learn about the laws and policies that affect them, workers gain the power to demand the recognition of their rights. With Informal Economy Budget Analysis (IBEA), governments can examine how and where they address the

economic needs of informal workers and if there are any potential areas in which these workers or their representatives can involve themselves in conversations surrounding their local or national economies.¹⁴ Lastly, for child care, female informal workers within Malawi stressed the need for childcare centers near market areas that run during typical working hours. Following this, WIEGO began discussing how they could implement their Child Care Initiative to better help women with children within relevant sectors.¹⁵ In WIEGO's analysis of their efforts so far, their capacity-building workshops have proven to be the cornerstone of this project's success. Bringing together leaders from all regions of Malawi, these workshops have fostered a sense of solidarity among participants., many of whom have pledged to collaborate across regions to address shared priorities. The workshops have also served as a platform for traders to exchange success stories in challenging authorities and to share negotiation tactics.

2018: Forging a Path Towards Recognition and Inclusion of Informal Workers in Johannesburg

The Public Dialogue on Forging a Path towards Recognition and Inclusion of Informal Workers, held at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) in Johannesburg, brought together informal worker leaders, experts on informal economy issues, and government representatives involved in implementing ILO Recommendation 204 (R204) in South Africa.¹⁶ During this conversation, valuable statistics regarding the state and value of informal work within the nation in question, South Africa, were brought up, many of which highlighted the gendered issues facing informal workers. Amongst informal workers in South Africa, the lowest earning group was private household workers, of which 80 *per cent* are women.¹⁷ Moreover, in terms of all individuals working informally, 7 *per cent* are employers (the highest earning group within the nation's informal sector), and 90 *per cent* of them are men. Across all informal sectors within the nation, men earn more than women in the same fields of work on average.¹⁸ Though a large subset of information discussed revolved around South African workers, the issues

and potential solutions were acknowledged to apply to governments internationally.

Also discussed within this Public Dialogue were the sources of issues surrounding informal workers. Primarily, the issue at hand was non-compliance. Workers lack the education to be aware of their rights and be able to navigate official avenues if they feel as if their rights are being infringed upon. Furthermore, employers are prone to shirking their responsibilities to their employees. Secondly, enforcement is also an issue for nations looking to regulate informal sectors. Depending on the policies of individual nations, there are sometimes no fines for non-compliance, a lack of workplace inspections, and legal loopholes employers can use to avoid accountability.¹⁹ With these challenges, speakers at the conference reiterated the need to ensure all workers' rights to collective bargaining, requiring some shifts in national legal structures. For example, while speaking at the panel, a waste picker leader from Colombia confirmed that the discussions surrounding the issues of South African informal labor were shared by those in other countries.²⁰

2020: The COVID-19 Pandemic and its Effects

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an extensive global impact, affecting various aspects of life worldwide. With over 130 million confirmed cases and two million fatalities as of August 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued guidelines to mitigate its spread. Despite concerted efforts by international organizations, governments, and academia to combat the virus, its impacts on labor markets persist and are expected to endure.²¹ Significant changes have been observed in workplaces globally, with remote work becoming prevalent and the global workforce declining at an unprecedented rate. Informal workers, constituting 61 *per cent* of the global workforce, are especially vulnerable due to lockdowns, mobility restrictions, and economic downturns.²² Women in particular face heightened vulnerability, with a significant proportion experiencing job loss and reduced wages.²³

In low-income countries, 92 *per cent* of women work informally compared to 87 *per cent* of men. Contributing family workers who are often unpaid constitute a significant

portion of women's informal employment, accounting for 28.1 *per cent* for women compared to 8.7 *per cent* for men.²⁴ The nature of women's informal work with the effects of COVID-19 also varies depending on working environments – many women engage in small-scale farming, playing a crucial role in ensuring food security in rural areas while in urban areas, women are frequently overrepresented in informal market or street vending, home-based work, and domestic service. For example, in Ghana's urban areas, women comprise over 80 *per cent* of market traders and street vendors, as well as 75 *per cent* of home-based workers.²⁵ The pandemic severely increased the need for social protection for women partaking in these forms of work. Many part-time domestic workers across the world– particularly in the Middle East and Asia– were dismissed from their jobs without pay.²⁶ Many nations have attempted to mediate the effects of job losses by providing cash transfers to informal workers– in nations such as Bolivia, Thailand, and more, cash transfer programs alleviate immediate financial stress by providing income replacement for those who have lost their jobs.²⁷ Other nations have attempted to increase benefit levels as well – all efforts that decrease financial and familial constraints for women during this period.²⁸

2021: The Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions

The Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions was initiated in September 2021 by the UN Secretary-General. It encapsulates an effort by the United Nations to confront issues that jeopardize development progress that advance towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN while creating quality employment in all sectors of work. It also aims to expand social protection to marginalized populations, such as women, who are currently excluded from existing structures.²⁹ The Global Accelerator, henceforth referred to as GA, focuses on transitioning informal sectors into formality. When delving into the perspectives and goals of informal economy actors, and while paying attention to gender dynamics within informal sectors,

integrated strategies that address multiple drivers of informality with various policy measures have proven to be the most effective. These strategies should strengthen incentives for formalization, provide decent work, and absorb current pools of informal workers into formal structures. Improving conditions for informal workers in low productivity and low-income areas can act as an enabler to facilitate a transition to formality.

Within the GA, the ideals of the United Nations are highlighted as such: actions made on a country-by-country basis should consider multiple options to move towards formality while accounting for socioeconomic tradeoffs that the nation may face. Policy creation should include solutions based on both incentives and compliance and should be malleable in addressing vulnerable groups— notably women— who are susceptible to work deficits and childcare constraints. Largely, the GA notes that gender impacts should be considered when reevaluating informal structures and assimilating them into formal structures, thereby creating equitable formal work opportunities for all.³⁰

Actors and Interests

Working Women

Working women are a subset of individuals within the informal work sector who are more susceptible to and most directly face lower wages, lack of access to social protection, violations of labor rights, and more. While informal employment internationally is a larger source of employment for men, at 63 *per cent* as opposed to 58.1 *per cent* for women, women are more exposed to informal employment within lower income nations and often face the brunt of vulnerable situations that come with their form of work.³¹ Within developing countries, around 61 *per cent* of women work within the informal economy, where they often lack coverage under their nation's minimum wage regulations.³² A general lack of regulatory measures within the informal sector continues to inhibit working women in other ways – globally, only 28 *per cent* of women have

access to maternity leave, and these numbers are significantly lower for women in the informal sector due to a lack of formal employment contracts.³³ In addition to this, in many nations, a large proportion of women in informal employment are excluded from social security systems. For example, in sub-Saharan Africa, only 2 *per cent* of women in informal employment contribute to a pension, compared to the 8 *per cent* of men who do so.³⁴ Women in the informal sector also often work in unsafe environments without adequate protection or safety measures. These “unsafe” measures differ from industry to industry, but persist nonetheless, from being large, dangerous pieces of machinery, hazardous chemicals within a workplace, or a general safety threat from working in unsafe areas while street-vending or otherwise.³⁵ These statistics all highlight the fundamental issue in the connection between the inadequate supervision of the informal workforce and the economic suppression of women within the sector.

The lack of regulation within informal work renders many women hesitant or unable to advocate for their rights as workers. Working women often face heightened levels of miseducation or reluctance towards formalization because of a lack of education surrounding the topic. Without education about formalization processes and labor laws, women in the sector are often unaware of their rights as workers. This makes them more susceptible to exploitation and abuse by employers who may take advantage of their ignorance. Many women in the informal sector may not know how to navigate formalization processes, such as registering their businesses, obtaining licenses, accessing financial support programs, and more. This in and of itself can act as a barrier to entry into the formal economy. Education surrounding formalization would empower women to negotiate better working conditions, wages, and benefits. Working women in the informal sector frequently not only lack an education relating to the nature of their work, but an official education in general – a strong correlation is shown between the level of education of women and their work, self-esteem, personal satisfaction, and many other economic and non-economic factors.³⁶ Women in the informal sector are more likely to experience wage violations such as below-minimum-wage payments or irregular payment

schedules.³⁷ This greatly contributes to the feminization of the working poor, which refers to the disproportionate representation of women among those who are employed but still live in poverty.³⁸ When women are overrepresented among the most economically vulnerable populations despite being active participants in the workforce, these women, particularly within middle and low-income countries, highlight a long-term issue where women fall deeper into poverty despite their best efforts.

Employers

Employers contribute to the informal economy through practices and behaviors that perpetuate the existence and expansion of informal employment. Historically, employers often underreport their employees or misclassify them as independent contractors to avoid paying taxes, making social security contributions, and engaging in other statutory benefits for their employees.³⁹ This is not an issue that pervades through only lower-income nations – oftentimes, it is the largest nations that house the most independent businesses and corporations, such as the United States, that engage in this practice.⁴⁰ When employers operate by misreporting the nature of their company’s work, they attempt to circumvent regulatory requirements and minimize their financial obligations. In many nations worldwide, without formal contracts or legal resorts, employers have more leeway to exploit their workers by subjecting them to low wages, long hours, no employment protections, and unsafe working conditions. Informal hiring practices also perpetuate informality by bypassing formal recruitment channels and labor market regulations.⁴¹ When employers rely on informal hiring through word-of-mouth referrals, temporary work arrangements, and cash payments for recruitment, employers maintain their access to a flexible workforce that develops on their own terms, outside of any regulatory landscapes that formalize hiring.⁴²

When informal work provides employers with an easily accessible workforce at a comparatively low cost, it makes sense that many employers actively resist formalization efforts and regulatory interventions that aim to bring them into compliance with labor laws

and regulations.⁴³ Employers may view formalization as burdensome and costly, preferring to operate in the informal economy where they have greater autonomy and control over their workers. The informal work sector is also different depending on the size and scale of the employers engaging with it. Large employers tend to use misclassification and underreporting to their advantage, while smaller employers such as micro-enterprises and family hiring use personal networks and referrals to hire. More specifically, for small employers, there is a limited capacity for formalization, as small employers may lack the resources, knowledge, or incentive to formalize the operations they engage in. Informal entrepreneurship is very common amongst smaller employers, from street vending to home-based work.⁴⁴ Both large and small employers tend to prioritize short-term gains over long-term investments in their employees' skills and training. Without providing access to formal training programs, professional development opportunities, or career advancement pathways, employers in the informal sector inhibit their employees by keeping them within low-wage, low-skilled jobs with limited prospects for upward mobility.

Employer opposition to regulation can come through a variety of mechanisms. Powerful corporations may lobby against regulatory reforms or challenge the enforcement of these actions through legal or political maneuvers. In addition, they may resist tax compliance, such as paying corporate income taxes or withholding taxes on employee wages. Tax evasion is often found in the informal economy, where cash transactions and informal accounting make it easier to conceal income and avoid taxes.⁴⁵

Governments and Public Interest Groups

One of the primary challenges governments face due to the informal work sector is the loss of tax revenues. Informal workers often operate outside of any formal tax systems, which reduces the government's revenue base.⁴⁶ This limits its ability to fund public services and contribute to other national responsibilities like infrastructure development and social security programs. When informal workers and their employers do not properly

contribute to social security systems, such as pension funds, unemployment insurance, and healthcare programs, governments may face challenges in financing their social protection programs that aim to support their vulnerable populations. Governments may struggle to enforce labor laws, health and safety standards, and other frameworks.⁴⁷

Even when legal frameworks and labor laws are set in place, governments may lack the resources or institutional capacity to enforce them. Corruption and social norms can undermine national efforts to promote compliance and accountability. In addition, informality is a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses a wide range of workers, activities, and industries. With varying levels of informality being involved in different sectors, government policies and interventions are challenged to be tailored to address specific challenges and needs on a sector-by-sector basis.⁴⁸ Governments would benefit from the formalization of sectors within their nations not only because of their revenue boosts but also through the long-term development of their workforces. By providing skills training, adequate education, and financial and social protections for formalization processes and formalized work, the appeal of informal work gradually drops. However, governments currently must deal with individuals and businesses who participate in the informal economy as a survival mechanism that's driven by economic necessity and lack of formal employment opportunities.⁴⁹

Nonprofits and public interest groups also play crucial roles in advocating for the rights of workers within the informal work sector. Many nonprofits provide legal aid services and empowerment programs to informal workers to help them navigate legal complexities and assert their rights regarding labor violations and similar issues. They can provide legal clinics and workshops.⁵⁰ Nonprofits can also offer capacity-building and skill-training workshops that enhance the livelihood opportunities of informal workers. They may focus on entrepreneurship, financial literacy, vocational skills, and occupational health and safety to enable workers to improve their productivity, income, and resilience in the informal economy.⁵¹ Gradually, these efforts can contribute to the formalization of

industries in which workers have incrementally improved their skills. Nonprofits and public interest groups are essential in conducting research and collecting data to document the experiences, challenges, and contributions of informal workers and help governments recognize gaps in policy and practice. They help inform policy debates, shape legal strategy, and generally support reforms that are in the interest of informal workers.⁵²

Possible Causes

Noncompliance and Lack of Enforcement

Noncompliance is the failure or refusal of corporations or individuals to adhere to laws or standards that are set by authorities. Within the informal work sector, businesses or people may disregard labor laws, tax regulations, or other safety standards. This entirely undermines the effectiveness of regulatory systems, diminishes government revenue, and compromises worker rights and safety.⁵³ In the past, large corporations such as Nike, Urban Outfitters, and other multinational companies have swerved legal limitations by outsourcing their labor to mostly female garment workers in nations with more lax regulations on worker safety.⁵⁴ The non-compliance of even smaller agents such as individual employers who use word-of-mouth referrals for hiring contribute to the issue as they gain profit from withholding employee information or without paying them adequate compensation.

A lack of enforcement pertains to governing bodies being unable to apply and uphold laws. This could mean authorities do not adequately monitor or act against violations that go against existing laws. Many times, this can be due to insufficient resources in the observation of actors within informal industries, corrupt officials, or lack of political will. In governmental structures where poorer individuals are disregarded as a priority in legislation, many officials feel no pressure to act on a structure of work that, though it severely violates the rights of their citizens and limits their potential, may benefit their private interests.⁵⁵ High levels of corruption and limited legal infrastructure can limit

smaller actors from enforcing labor laws and policies even when they try. When enforcement is lacking, noncompliant actors can operate with impunity, which further denigrates the quality and standards of the workforces in question.

Gender Roles and Educational Bias

Gender roles within the informal economy often limit women within the sector, as they frequently hold primary responsibility for caregiving and household duties. This can limit their access to formal employment opportunities. Many core issues contribute to gender inequities within the informal sector. Firstly, informal jobs are predominantly held by low-skilled workers with little to no formal education. In sub-Saharan Africa, a vast majority of low-skilled workers are employed informally. The informal sector absorbs 95 *per cent* of workers without education and 90 *per cent* of those with only primary education within the region. Within this region, the gender gap also persists – girls spend only 70 *per cent* of the time boys do in school, and in some countries like Chad and Guinea, this percentage drops to 30 *per cent*.⁵⁶ This pattern can be observed in regions across the world, and the lack of education for girls can often be attributed to gender roles within societies that cause family units to prioritize the education of boys over girls.⁵⁷ These gender roles can persist over time as their familial responsibilities continuously trump their educational priorities.

Contributing to gender roles is the expanding childcare crisis, which has been exacerbated internationally following the pandemic. Women globally perform more than three-quarters of unpaid care and domestic work within their respective nations, especially women who are from low-income migrant communities.⁵⁸ In addition, according to conservative estimates, the monetary value of women's unpaid work would be up to 40 *per cent* of the GDP of certain measured nations, further proving the hidden value within their work.⁵⁹ Following a labor shortage within various industries, working parents – especially mothers – struggle to find decent childcare while working.⁶⁰

As early marriage, early childbearing, and lack of family planning persevere within nations, women and their families deprioritize their education, and their abilities to compete in the labor market drop.⁶¹ In general, the time constraints of maintaining families and simultaneously dealing with disadvantages in education limit women in their careers.

Economic Limitations

Women in the formal sector can face systemic economic inequalities, including limited access to financial resources, property ownership, and more. Financial resources like credit and savings are essential for starting or expanding a business. However, many financial institutions require some form of collateral to approve a loan, such as some form of property or assets. Many women in low-income communities do not have property rights or formal ownership of assets, which makes it difficult for them to meet these requirements. In addition, creditworthiness is determined by analyzing financial statements and business documents that informal sector businesses often lack. Discriminatory lending practices may also play a factor in determining the quality of support financial institutions provide women. Women may be offered less ideal loan terms or denied access to credit completely, which would limit their ability to invest in their businesses or deal with financial emergencies.

Informal work provides an “easier” way to make money with more flexibility for a woman’s other responsibilities, and when a woman needs to make money for herself or her family’s survival, she does not have the time to explore career options or educational opportunities.⁶² Dealing with the formalities of officializing a business or being involved with established financial institutions is often infeasible for women with little to no support from other individuals in their endeavors. Even if women in unstructured or unsafe work environments want to leave their jobs for alternate employment or their safety, they often cannot do so because they hold a financial responsibility to their families and need extra income.⁶³

Comparison of Causes

The intersections between noncompliance and enforcement, gender roles, and educational and economic limitations shape the dynamics of the informal economy particularly for women. Gender roles are pervasive in every region of the world and at every step of women's educational and economic development. Within the informal economy, women who face exploitation and unsafe working conditions are often in that position due to underlying issues within women's education and the gender biases associated with low-pay jobs. This can perpetuate cycles of poverty and vulnerability within informal industries since workers have very limited means to address institutional issues or demand better for themselves. Because of the economic limitations women face within informal sectors, women who want better for themselves are not provided with plausible exit opportunities.

Projections and Implications

It has been repeatedly shown that countries with large informal sectors consistently grow below their potential.⁶⁴ The rise of automation and digital platforms in certain sectors of the informal economy may lead to the displacement of traditional female-dominated occupations, such as domestic work and small-scale agriculture. Without adequate support and training programs, women in these sectors may face increased economic insecurity and vulnerability. These vulnerabilities only worsen the status of women within the informal industry over time –while the sector may offer flexibility and potential for income generation, women often face issues such as lower wages, limited access to social protections, and gender disparities in income. Moreover, barriers such as hindered access to education, unpaid care work burdens, and health and safety risks persist, preventing women from pursuing higher-paying jobs or completing their education. Addressing these challenges necessitates a comprehensive approach that includes improving access to

education and training, strengthening social protections, promoting gender equality, and formalizing the informal economy to create more secure employment opportunities for women. All of this must be balanced with consideration of nations' needs on a case-by-case basis, as the informal sector operates differently in different parts of the world.⁶⁵ By creating more opportunities for formalized work and fine-tuning solutions to apply to women across the world, regardless of region or form of work, solutions have a chance of having a long-term impact – the inevitable goal of this committee.

Committee Jurisdiction

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is a significant global intergovernmental entity operating under the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), with its establishment dating back to 1946 aimed at advancing gender equality and empowering women. ECOSOC, through resolution 1996/6, expanded CSW's role, designating it as the primary body for monitoring progress and addressing issues related to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration.⁶⁶ Furthermore, this resolution identified CSW as a key entity responsible for integrating gender perspectives across all United Nations activities. CSW develops long-term programs to assess progress and propose measures for advancing the Platform for Action, a framework established by the Beijing Declaration aimed at promoting women's rights. Functioning as a global policy-making forum, CSW convenes annually to establish global standards, deliberate on advancements and challenges, and devise new policies centered around a predetermined thematic priority. Through negotiation processes, CSW formulates agreed conclusions on priority themes and supports the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to accelerate progress towards gender equality and women's empowerment. CSW assumes a pivotal role in raising awareness, fostering dialogue, and fostering international collaboration on gender equality and women's empowerment, serving as a platform for advocacy and mobilization to drive global progress in these areas.⁶⁷

Conclusion

It is essential to understand that in many nations, informal work is deeply ingrained within societal functions and industries. It can sometimes be the case that informal work comes with its own benefits to workers and employers alike - workers often enjoy a direct and close relationship with their employers, facilitating easier communication and the granting of time off when needed. Furthermore, personnel matters are typically handled swiftly and without bureaucratic hurdles, either by the employer personally or by a senior manager. The hiring process is often streamlined by placing less emphasis on formal interviews and tests, and sometimes employment is secured through personal connections rather than solely based on merit.⁶⁸ These changes are often more suitable for women looking for work when they do not necessarily have the right credentials for more formal industries. While these benefits are apparent, the United Nations and other regulatory bodies must acknowledge the negative aspects that develop over time with the informal sector. Due to its unregulated nature, the informal sector can lead to a lack of social security benefits for workers, such as healthcare, retirement plans, and unemployment insurance, leaving employees vulnerable in times of need. Additionally, informal sector jobs often lack stability and job security, with workers facing uncertain income streams and limited opportunities for career advancement or skill development. Moreover, the informal sector may hinder overall economic growth by contributing to tax evasion and reducing government revenue, which could otherwise be used for public services and infrastructure. Informal sector activities may also perpetuate inequality by offering lower wages and fewer benefits compared to formal sector employment, exacerbating social disparities. Lastly, the informal sector may hinder productivity and innovation by operating outside of regulatory frameworks that ensure quality standards and fair competition. While the informal sector may seem like an acceptable and functioning

Discussion Questions

- What are the correlates of informality within your nation's region, and how do they contribute to your nation's economic and social stability?
- What policy implementations are feasible for your nation's current economic and political structures?
- What past financial or institutional endeavors have worked well in providing social safety to informal workers? Can they still work today?
- How can we support a gender-responsive recovery for women in the informal economy who have disproportionately suffered as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic?
- How may digitalization factor into the formalization of informal sectors or to the loss or creation of those jobs?

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For Further Reading

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This video source is important to watch and consider the implications of the recent Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on women specifically. The informal sector should be analyzed with the most modern contextualizations possible, and disregarding the influence of the pandemic will lead to half-hearted solutions that do not properly address all facets of the issue.

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Despite the fact this is an American source, the childcare crisis permeates every region of the world. Women often face the brunt of the consequences, having to be the first within family units to quit or limit their work to take care of children and maintain their homes. This is an essential issue to understand when creating solutions that acknowledge mothers within the workforce, and not only mothers – women everywhere see the benefits of inclusive legislation that works to impact more rather than less people with its effects.

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