



**International
Labour
Organization**

Preparing future generations of women for new jobs demands: skilling, re-skilling, digitalization and automation

The International Labour Organization (ILO)

Thank you, Madame Chair,

Warm greetings from the International Labour Organization.

To echo the words of the UN Deputy Secretary General, without decisive action the digital divide will become “the new face of inequality”. Madame Chair, new faces can wear old expressions.

Globally, young women are twice as likely as young men not to be in employment, education or training. Even when gender gaps in education are closed, systemic and structural barriers to access, remain and advance in the world of work are still present. These gaps are even more pronounced when gender discrimination is compounded by intersecting factors such as disability, race and ethnicity, HIV status, SOGIESC and socio-economic status. According to ILO data, persons with disabilities are almost twice as likely to have NEET status (not in employment, education or training) and young women with disabilities are more likely to hold NEET status than young men with disabilities.

Women still perform more than two-thirds of all unpaid care and domestic work, whilst predominating in the lower paid, less secure and more hazardous jobs in the paid health and care sectors. The global gender pay gap remains stubborn at around 20 per cent – worse for racialised, migrant, and indigenous women and for women with disabilities. Gender-based violence and harassment is a scourge, preventing women from entering, staying and advancing at work. Again, women affected by intersecting forms of discrimination including race, social origin and gender identity or sexual orientation tend to be particularly affected.

Ensuring that current and future generations of girls and women can seize the opportunities presented by technological change and innovation, including by acquiring in-demand skills, means transforming current, deeply entrenched gender relations, biases and discrimination, that also deprive women and girls from access to digital tools and technology and often relegate women to work in the informal economy in greater numbers than men. It also requires proactively addressing new risks and challenges. Women engaged in digital jobs or working in the tech industry are often exposed to increased risk of exhaustion and burnout, a high degree of job instability and uncertainty, and the risk of discrimination and violence and harassment, including that enabled by communication technologies.

Gender-transformative policies and measures are essential to address existing ingrained structural barriers, as well as new faces of inequality. Some of these measures include:

- Active labour market policies that include gender-responsive employment policies, skills anticipation and development, to facilitate a just transition to new occupations and jobs, or to changing demands within existing jobs. Such policies should pay particular attention to specific groups of women at risk of being left behind, such as women with disabilities, young women, racialized and indigenous women.
- Equipping women not only with digital and technical skills, but with access to digital tools and technology is essential in closing the digital gender divide.
- Providing universal, comprehensive and adequate social protection, including care leave policies and care services which encourage the redistribution of unpaid care work between women and men and between the family and the State.

- Fostering an enabling environment for social dialogue, including collective bargaining, to minimize the adverse impacts of digitalization and automation and maximize the potential benefits of technological progress, including for advancing gender equality, equity and non-discrimination.
- Ratifying and implementing International Labour Standards such as Convention 100 on Equal Remuneration; Convention 111 on Discrimination in Employment and Occupation; Convention 156 on Workers with Family Responsibilities; Convention 183 on Maternity Protection and Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment in the world of work. Convention 190 and its accompanying Recommendation 206 provide a comprehensive framework to prevent and address all instances of violence and harassment in the world of work, including those enabled by communication and technology.

The ILO, through its relevant instruments and frameworks, such as the International Labour Standards, and a mandate to advance social justice stands ready to provide effective guidance to advance equal opportunities and treatment and equitable outcomes for all women in the world of work. Innovation and technological change must be part of accelerating progress on gender equality and not a way to hold women back.

On behalf of the International Labour Organization, I thank you Madame Chair.