

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

Conference on Linkages Between Paid and Unpaid Work in Human Resource Policy

7 – 8 May 1999

Hong Kong, China

APEC Human Resource Development Working Group

May 1999

Report on the APEC HRD NEDM Project and Conference

Linkages Between Paid and Unpaid Work in Human Resource Policy

May 7-8, 1999, Hong Kong, China

Background

This project presents a gender-sensitive analysis of labour markets. It asks questions about where women are working, and how policies have different impacts on women and men. The project emerged from a recognition that while women's participation rates in formal labour markets are very high in most APEC member economies, women are also employed in unpaid and informal sector work. This contribution to economic growth through work in the unpaid sector is not well recognized in human resource or other policy because it is not captured in official statistics. Thus, measures that would assist unpaid and informal sector workers take advantage of opportunities in the market are often omitted from policy. Further, the possible negative impacts of policies and programs on the unpaid sector may be left out of policy deliberations.

Project Goals and Objectives

A key goal of the project was to illustrate how program and policy effectiveness have been enhanced when linkages between workers' paid and unpaid work are recognized and integrated. This includes more responsive and targeted programming in human resource development policy, and policies that will contribute to greater balance between human and economic development.

Specific objectives of the project are to:

- develop an APEC network of gender specialists and HRD policymakers;
- identify good practices in the public and private sector that recognize paid and unpaid work;
- elaborate a role for APEC in enhancing Asia-Pacific regional awareness of women's needs and roles and access to resources.

The experts from the nine participating economies (Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Chinese Taipei, Thailand, United States) met as a team three times (Chinese Taipei, June 1998; Santiago, January 1999, and Hong Kong, China, May 7, 1999) to set the key directions for the project, assess progress mid-term, and discuss the final reports and develop recommendations.

Throughout the implementation stage, the project received strong support from local partner organizations: in Chinese Taipei, the Academia Sinica; in Santiago, Chile, CEPAL and SERNAM, (Ministry of Women's Affairs), and in Hong Kong, China, the Education and Manpower Bureau and the Equal Opportunities Commission. Linkages were also developed with multilateral and regional organizations and networks interested in issues relating to paid and unpaid work.

Throughout the project, efforts were made to engage broadly with the government, research, private sector, civil society and labour sectors, both during the research phase for the member economy reports, and at project meetings in Santiago and Hong Kong, China. The 42 participants at the May 8 Hong Kong, China conference came from government, research institutions, private sector, civil society and labour organizations.

Project Outputs:

The project was posted on the APEC Secretariat website, prompting several requests to participate in the concluding conference and to receive the project results. The framework paper, member economy papers and project recommendations will be made broadly available through the Internet and via a publication to be completed by the end of 1999. In addition, the results of the conference will be reported to relevant APEC forums, including the HRD WG and networks. Individual project team members will be reporting to their respective domestic networks.

Linkages Between paid and Unpaid Work in Human Resource Policy: **Conference Report and Recommendations**

The conference was opened by Mr. Anthony Reynolds, Principal Assistant Secretary for Education and Manpower, Government of Hong Kong, Special Administrative Region. Dr. Fanny M. Cheung, Chair, Equal Opportunities Commission, Hong Kong, China, was the keynote speaker.

Panel discussions were held on the following key thematic areas that emerged from the country papers:

- Policy linkages between paid and unpaid work
- Economic and social policy linkages: implications for allocating fiscal resources
- Economic and social significance of unpaid work in the voluntary sector
- Impacts of the financial crisis on the unpaid sector
- Flexibility issues: considerations for employers, employees and governments
- Unpaid work in the informal and agriculture sectors

Recommendations:

The framework paper and individual member economy papers contain recommendations for governments, the HRD Working Group and other APEC forums. The project team and conference participants identified the following as key priority areas:

1. Recognizing the contribution of unpaid work to the economy

Governments:

The financial crisis has heightened awareness of stability and security in human resource development, and the need to find ways to make livelihoods less precarious. For this reason, it is important to develop instruments that will measure how people earn livelihoods. A key instrument is time use surveys that reveal a more complete picture of the economy than instruments such as labour force surveys.

APEC HRD Working Group:

The conference heard from several participants about the need for better understanding of the use and application of time use survey mechanisms. The HRD Working Group could develop a project to share “best practices” in instruments that would measure how people earn livelihoods. A follow-up to a “best practices” workshop could be training programs in time-use survey and accounting methodology.

SOM Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Gender Integration:

Policy will have differential impacts on women and men, and on unpaid work. One way to make visible the impacts of policy on unpaid work is through gender aware budget exercises. To follow-up on calls by APEC Ministers Responsible for Women for APEC to recognize the significance of unpaid work, the *SOM Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Gender Integration* could coordinate a gender-aware budget exercise. Initially, a pilot exercise could be considered, involving two or three member economies to test existing methodologies.

2. Harmonizing Work-Family Tension at the Workplace

APEC HRD Working Group:

Economy papers prepared for the project included examples of “best practices” from the private as well as public sector of policies and programs that attempted to harmonize work-family tension. Several participants expressed a desire for more information on how companies can be encouraged to take steps in this direction. The Business Management Network could consider organizing a dialogue on family-friendly workplaces. This could take the form of a conference, or an on-line dialogue. Outputs could include a publication of “best practices” in the APEC region.

3. Response to the Asian Financial Crisis: Social Safety Nets

APEC HRD Working Group:

The conference heard how mainstream social impact frameworks fail to capture the contribution of the informal, unpaid sector to the economy. The lack of visibility is not confined to statistics, but includes a widespread lack of attention in the mainstream news service coverage of the crisis as well. The conference recommended that APEC HRD develop a system to monitor the impact of economic policies and restructuring packages on unpaid work, to make visible the often hidden dimensions of economic policy impacts, and to have an accurate assessment of resource use and allocation. This could be implemented through support for and linkages with initiatives underway in organizations such as ENGENDER, a Singapore-based regional organization that is developing an on-line news service to address the critical gender gap in mainstream discourse and decision-making. Other initiatives of interest include Malaysia’s *Women Watch*.

APEC:

In view of the significance of the informal and agriculture sectors, particularly as sources for livelihood for women, APEC should dialogue with international agencies to encourage them to recognize and integrate the agricultural and informal sectors in recovery packages. Further, all safety-net response packages should be gender-sensitive.