

APEC HRD NEDM

Linkages Between Paid and Unpaid Work in Human Resource Policy

Summary of Recommendations from Member Economy Papers May, 1999

1. As a top priority: recognize the contribution of unpaid work to the functioning of the economy:

- Governments should promote recognition of the contribution of women's unpaid work. Information collected through time-use surveys will give a truer picture of the economy than, for example, labour force surveys which omit significant portions of the population.
- Governments should develop appropriate and timely time-use survey instruments and continue work on developing methodology to evaluate unpaid work.
- APEC HRD WG should take steps to recognize the significance of unpaid work in the functioning of the economy in its projects and activities by integrating gender analysis in its project management cycle.
- APEC HRD WG could develop a project to share "best practices" in time-use survey methodology, and provide training in time-use survey and accounting methodology.

2. Policies to Harmonize Work-Family Tension

Recommendations for the Private Sector:

- Recognize, help and reward private sector initiatives that are directed to harmonizing work-family tension. An example is the annual awards by the US magazine, *Working Mothers*.
- Promote understanding of the economic benefits of family-friendly policies in the workplace. The Department of Industrial Relations, NSW, Australia, commissioned a study on the business case for family friendly workplaces, which includes a cost-benefit methodology for businesses.
- Governments could coordinate national conferences on family-friendly workplaces;
- The most frequently-cited example of "good practice" is the provision of childcare. Whether childcare is best situated at the workplace or in the community will depend on considerations such as distance traveled to work and health and safety considerations at the workplace. The team learned of a foreign social investment mechanism in Chile, where a foreign investor "invested" in the provision of daycare facilities in the community where it proposed to base itself.
- Key considerations in evaluating family friendly practices are the discrepancies between *de jure* and *de facto* rights. Policies and practices need to be evaluated according to their implementation rate and their take-up rate.

- Research is needed to understand why the private sector may not take up fiscal incentives provided by governments for family-friendly practices, and why some family-friendly policies have poor take-up by workers.

Recommendations for the Public Sector:

- It is important that governments make clear the set of assumptions about families that are embedded in policy, and consider whether various policy initiatives are actually consistent with those assumptions. Governments may have conflicting human resource policies. One framework that the project team discussed set out the following models of the family:
 1. Patriarchal model – The wife/mother is viewed as the economic dependent of the husband/father. Policies tend to reinforce the economic role of men over women (for example, unequal pension and benefit schemes, which would make it more advantageous for a household to favour male employment or investment in training over that of the female).
 2. Individual responsibility model - Both partners are seen as responsible for their own support and that of the other, and for the care of the family. In this model, the state tends not to provide support if one partner becomes unable to fulfill either role, since it is assumed the other will provide the need (eg: no support is provided for a single parent because it is assumed the individual can combine both income-generating and childcare/family responsibilities, although formerly these tasks were shared with the other parent).
 3. The project team recommended the “social responsibility model” as a “good practice”. Under this model, policy is based on the assumption that every adult is responsible for both his/her own economic support and that of the household. The implications for policy of this assumption is that all policies would attempt to attract women and men equally into the labour market. As a result, labour markets would become more flexible, in the sense that there would be a reduction in distinctions between full- and part-time work; unpaid work would have to be recognized as work and treated as such (in terms of benefits and supports), and policies would aim to harmonize work and family responsibilities for both women and men. Examples include: reform of tax and social security policies to eliminate the concept of the sole-breadwinner in a two-adult family; reform of the tax and social security systems to facilitate flexibility in the way people divide their time between education and training, paid employment, family responsibilities and volunteer activity; family friendly workplaces, childcare, etc.

3. Policies to support the voluntary sector:

- Governments should develop methods to monitor and evaluate the contribution of the voluntary sector to the economy by, for example, time use surveys;
- Governments and the private sector could develop measures to compensate or reward voluntary work, including a banking system (for example, a mechanism whereby volunteer workers could “bank” credit for voluntary work that could be exchanged for other voluntary services);
- Tax deductions or credits for voluntary work;
- Governments could collaborate with private sector and civil society organizations to develop and support a pool of volunteers (tax or pension credits; flex time; phased retirement that would permit individual to combine volunteer work with part-time employment);

- Governments and the private sector should collaborate with civil society organizations to develop policies and programs that value unpaid work, highlight good practices, and mobilize resources for research.

4. Social Safety Nets:

- In many APEC economies, women, through their unpaid and informal activities, and the agriculture sector, provide social safety nets for families.
- Specific measures are needed in recovery plans to address the needs of vulnerable groups, including women, migrant workers, the elderly.
- The poor, particularly poor women, have little access to information about social safety net programs, therefore, programs should build in special efforts to reach poor women.
- Governments and institutions need to develop mechanisms that will monitor the impact of policies and programs on unpaid work. A specific recommendation to the APEC HRD WG in one paper was that the working group develop a system to monitor the impact of economic policies and restructuring packages on unpaid work. This kind of impact assessment would make visible the often hidden dimensions of economic policy impacts, and would provide an accurate assessment of resource use and allocation. One suggestion to implement the recommendation was for the HRD WG to support and link up with initiatives such as that proposed by ENGENDER (a Singapore-based regional organization) for a news service that would focus on women's livelihoods. Another suggestion was for APEC HRD to develop linkages to civil society initiatives such as Malaysia's *Women Watch*.
- APEC HRD WG should explore regional cooperation in developing systems to monitor the impact of policies and programs on unpaid work. One mechanism is the gender-aware budget exercise. A recommendation directed to the Ad Hoc Task Force on the Integration of Women is for a pilot project that might partner two or three member economies to test existing methodologies.
- The neediest should be the focus for poverty alleviation and training for self-employment and micro-enterprise development. Employment and training should be selective, targeting poor individual households, household groups and geographic areas.
- Include literacy training for the inexperienced poor.

5. Measures to harness the productive potential of the unpaid and informal sectors:

- APEC should dialogue with international agencies to encourage them to recognize the importance of the informal, unpaid sector in recovery programs.
- Research on the relationship between paid and unpaid work; and the formal and informal sectors;
- Research on the policy responses that will enable all workers to take advantage of the opportunities that emerge in periods of economic reconstruction;
- Steps to harness the full potential of unpaid workers, including: community-based training; expand capacity-building programs to provide on-site services in skills development; link skills training to existing job opportunities; promote growth-oriented micro-enterprises;

- Increase equality between paid and unpaid work through measures that will reduce women's time burden;
- Training for the self-employed in administrative and managerial skills; entrepreneurial skills; technology and science;
- Labour protection for women workers in the informal sector;
- Collect good practices in developing alternatives to urban-based industrial growth. One example cited was the local employment schemes developed by the Population and Development Association of Thailand.

6. Measures to Increase Women's Participation in Paid Work:

- Understand the barriers to women re-entering the paid workforce after a period of absence;
- Understand barriers to women accessing vocational training;
- Examine systematic barriers, including policies that reinforce gender stereotypes (for example, women in the household; men as breadwinner), including differential benefits and pension entitlements;
- "Support" measures, including childcare, healthy work environments; eliminate gender discrimination and gender stereotyping;
- Accessible labour market information, particularly for poor women who may have weak access to information.