



Equal Pay
International Coalition

EQUAL PAY FOR WORK OF EQUAL VALUE

The Gender Pay Gap: Addressing gendered income inequality

Applying the principle of equal pay for work of equal value

in times of crisis and rising poverty

CSW68 Side Event co-organized by UN Women, ILO and OECD

Co-sponsored by UN Women, OECD, ILO and

the Governments of Canada, Iceland, Panama, Ukraine and Switzerland

Canada



Government of Iceland
Prime Minister's Office

REPÚBLICA DE PANAMÁ
GOBIERNO NACIONAL

MINISTERIO DE TRABAJO
Y DESARROLLO LABORAL

MINISTRY OF
ECONOMY
OF UKRAINE

Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Date: Thursday, 21 March 2024, New York

Conference Room 6 – General Assembly Building

Time: 10:00 am – 11:15 am (EST)

Concept Note

The priority theme of the sixty-eighth session of the Commission on the Status of Women calls for addressing poverty and strengthening institutions and financing by adopting a gender perspective as crucial means for accelerating the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.

Yet, as the latest report on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) unequivocally states, *the world is falling short of meeting most of the SDGs by 2030*.¹ Regarding Goal 5 on gender equality, only 2 of 18 indicators are close to reaching the global target and only slightly more than half the data needed to monitor progress are available.²

The significant decline in extreme poverty experienced over the past years had been reversed in 2020 following the detrimental effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, pushing 90 million people into extreme poverty. The decline of global poverty to pre-pandemic level experienced in 2023, *de facto* hides

¹ United Nations. (2023). [The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2023: Special edition](#).

² UN Women and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). (2023). [Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2023](#).

uneven progress across regions and income. Since 2020, high- and upper-middle-income countries have seen a steady decrease in poverty due to social and fiscal stimulus programmes that supported households and frequently helped them maintain a strong labour market attachment. However, between 2022 and 2023, poverty levels in low-income, fragile and conflict-affected countries worsened compared to pre-pandemic levels.³

The combination of multiple crises and rising inflation may derail progress even further. Given the slow and uneven progress in poverty reduction, on current trajectories 691 million people will still be living in extreme poverty by 2030.⁴

Poverty impacts women and men differently.⁵ The rights of women to participate in the economy equally and fully is still unrealized. Around 340 million women and girls are estimated to live in extreme poverty and earn less than US\$2.15 a day.⁶ In most regions of the world, women are overrepresented among the poorest people and underrepresented among the richest.⁷

The overrepresentation of women among the poor seems intrinsically connected to historical and systemic discrimination that disproportionately impacts women's access to economic opportunities and equal treatment, undermines women's voice and power, and increases women's poverty. These figures worsen when gender intersects with disability⁸, race, class, migration status and other personal characteristics.

Globally, labour force participation rate for women is at 50 per cent compared to 80 per cent for men.⁹ Women's ability to engage, remain and progress in paid work is constricted by the unequal division of housework and care responsibilities. Furthermore, the gender pay gap remains at 19 per cent globally, ranging from 13 per cent in low-income countries to 21 per cent in upper-middle-income countries. Women also experience significantly lower social protection coverage than men, a discrepancy that largely reflects and reproduces their lower labour force participation rates and higher levels of temporary and precarious work and informal employment. All these factors contribute to lower income, savings and pensions of women and gendered poverty in old age.¹⁰

Concrete policy solutions, measures and tools exist to support governments, workers and employers to close the gender pay gap (GPG) and reduce poverty such as pay transparency measures¹¹, minimum wages, voluntary target setting and mandatory quotas for women in leadership positions, affordable care services and infrastructure, and paid maternity, paternity and parental leave.¹² Effective social dialogue, including collective bargaining, through the representative voices of employers and workers,

³ Nishant Yonzan et al. (2023). "[Poverty is back to pre-COVID levels globally, but not for low-income countries](#)," World Bank blog, 3 October.

⁴ Daniel Gerszon Mahler et al. (2023). [Illustrating the gap between the global extreme poor and global emissions](#), World Bank blog, 3 October.

⁵ SDG Action. (2023). [Poverty is not gender-neutral](#). Article. 6 March.

⁶ UN Women and UN DESA. (2023). [Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The Gender Snapshot 2023](#).

⁷ ILO. (2021). [Inequalities and the world of work](#).

⁸ UN Women. (2019). [Making the SDGs Count for Women and Girls with Disabilities](#). Issue Brief.

⁹ World Bank. (2022). [Female labor force participation](#). 10 January.

¹⁰ SDG Action. (2023). [Poverty is not gender-neutral](#); OECD. [Income Distribution Database](#); OECD. (2023). [Pensions at a Glance 2023: OECD and G20 Indicators](#).

¹¹ OECD. (2021), [Pay Transparency Tools to Close the Gender Wage Gap](#) and OECD. (2023), [Reporting Gender Pay Gaps in OECD Countries: Guidance for Pay Transparency Implementation, Monitoring and Reform](#).

¹² OECD. (2023). [SIGI 2023 Global Report: Gender Equality in Times of Crisis](#).



can facilitate the development and implementation of equal pay policies, eliminate discriminatory hiring and promotion practices, and create more inclusive and equitable workplaces and society.

Recognizing and addressing these systemic challenges and closing the gender pay gap is vital in the fight against women's poverty.

What can be done? The Equal Pay International Coalition (EPIC) recognizes that the gender pay gap and poverty are complex interrelated challenges. As such, progress can only be accelerated through cooperation and collaboration between a diverse range of stakeholders while adopting a holistic and intersectional approach, ensuring men and women in all their diversity ***have access to and enjoy decent work, with equal pay for work of equal value***. EPIC offers a safe space to raise awareness, share knowledge, embrace innovation and scale up good practices, while also providing support to improve legislation, build capacity, and strengthen monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to achieve equal pay for work of equal value.

Objectives

- i. Explore the potential impact of closing the gender pay gap on addressing women's poverty.
- ii. Share best practices and strategies to close the gender pay gap including in times of multiple overlapping crises.
- iii. Strengthen global, regional and national commitments to pay equity as one of the strategies to reduce poverty, as well as strengthening EPIC membership.

Format

- The side event will take place **on 21st March from 10:00 am to 11:15 am (EST)**.
- It will be a hybrid event: in person and **webcast coverage on UN Web TV** website at: <http://webtv.un.org>.
- It will be in English language only.
- **To attend the event in person please register [HERE](#)**

Programme

The Gender Pay Gap: Addressing gendered income inequality Applying the principle of equal pay for work of equal value in times of crisis and rising poverty

21 March 2024

10:00 am – 11:15 am (EST)

Conference Room 6 – General Assembly Building

10:00 – 10:05 Welcoming panelists and purpose of the side event

Moderator:

Rakesh Patry, Director General, International and Intergovernmental Labour Affairs, Department of Employment and Social Development, Canada, and EPIC Steering Committee Chair

10:05 – 10:20 Opening remarks

- **UN Women – Jemimah Njuki**, Chief Economic Empowerment Section (confirmed)
- ***ILO – Chidi King**, Branch Chief, Gender, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (confirmed remote)
- ***OECD – Monika Queisser**, Senior Counsellor to the Director of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs Directorate and the Head of Social Policy Division, OECD (TBC)

10:20 – 11:10 Panel discussion (3–4-minute intervention per panelist)

- **The Republic of Panama – Doris Zapata Acevedo**, Minister of Labor and Workforce Development of the Republic of Panama
- ***Ukraine – Tetiana Berezna**, Deputy Minister of Economy of Ukraine
- ***The Kingdom of Jordan – Her Excellency Maha Ali**, Secretary General of the Jordanian National Commission for Women
- **The European Commission – Greet Vermeulen**, Policy Officer, Gender Equality Unit, DG Justice
- **Switzerland - Sandra Lengwiler** – International Affairs Officer at the Swiss Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE)
- **Youth activist – Cairo Eubanks**, New Future Foundation International Civil Society Youth Representative to the United Nations and the Chair of the United Nations Department of Global Communications Civil Society Youth Representatives Steering Committee
- **The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) – Siobhan Vipond**, Executive Vice-President of the Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)
- **The International Organization of Employers (IOE) - Ms Michelle Fertig**, Principal of Global Employer Services of Deloitte Tax LLP

11:10 – 11:15 Closing remarks

Rakesh Patry, Director General, International and Intergovernmental Labour Affairs, Department of Employment and Social Development, Canada, and EPIC Steering Committee Chair

**Virtual participation*