



Permanent Mission of the
Argentine Republic
United Nations



SIDE EVENT DURING THE ECOSOC HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM 2021

WOMEN'S INTEGRATION TO THE LABOR FORCE IN THE COVID-19 RECOVERY EFFORTS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN PROMOTING DECENT WORK FOR WOMEN

6th July 2021, 13:00hs – 14:30hs EST

Click here to register:

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DRAFT PROGRAM

Women's Integration to the Labor Force in the COVID-19 Recovery Efforts: Challenges and opportunities in promoting decent work for women

Speakers:

- Minister of Women and Gender Equality of Chile, H.E. Monica Zalaquett
- Minister of Women of Dominican Republic, H.E Mayra Jimenez
- Executive Secretary of the National Women's Institute of Mexico, Dr. Patricia Uribe
- Permanent Representative of Argentina to the United Nations, H.E. María del Carmen Squeff
- Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Ms. Alicia Bárcena
- Director of UN Women Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, Ms. Maria Noel Vaeza
- International Labor Organization (ILO), Conditions of Work and Equality Department Director, Ms. Manuela Tomei
- Coalition to End Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, Ms. Anita Thomas

Q &A Segment



CONCEPT NOTE

Women's Integration to the Labor Force in the COVID-19 Recovery Efforts: Challenges and opportunities in promoting decent work for women

OBJECTIVE

This event will evaluate best practices to apply measures to implement SDG 8 from a gender perspective, in order to put women empowerment at the core of the emergency and recovery efforts to avoid long-term damages to women's job prospects and to build back better and fairer. Including by:

- a) Addressing the issue of care crisis as a structural element generating the disproportionate impact on women's withdrawal from the world of work during the pandemic.
- b) Enhancing Digital inclusion for women and reducing the digital gender gap
- c) Incorporating a gender perspective in recovery strategies, either through public policies by national authorities, public-private partnerships, and other relevant stakeholders.

BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic hit the Latin America and Caribbean region in a context of low economic growth and increasing poverty and inequalities. The economic and social effects of the pandemic are expected to have a significant impact on women's autonomy. According to ECLAC, 56.9% of women in Latin America and 54.3% in the Caribbean are employed in sectors in which a greater negative effect is expected in terms of employment and income due to the COVID-19 crisis.

It has been demonstrated that worldwide, the COVID-19 pandemic has hit women's labor market opportunities hardest, likely to reverse some of the progress made under SDG 8, which aims to promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.

The labor market disruption in 2020 far exceeded the impact of the global financial crisis in 2009. Employment losses were not only unprecedented but also steeper for women (5.0 per cent) than for men (3.9 per cent).

Moreover, as school closures due to lockdowns required more at-home supervision of children, women were much more likely to drop out of the labor force than men. The share of women in managerial positions has decreased worldwide, sometimes significantly, thus, increasing the longstanding gender gaps in labor force participation rates.

Latin America and the Caribbean region is one of the most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic hit the region in a context of low economic growth and increasing poverty and inequalities. The economic and social effects of the pandemic are expected to have a significant impact on women's autonomy. The International Labour Organization (ILO) latest available data indicates that in 2020 the labor participation rate of women experienced a historical drop of 5.4 percentage points (a decline of 10.3 percent) reaching a level of 46.4 percent. This means that nearly 12 million women left the regional workforce due to the destruction of jobs.

In this context, women's integration in the labor force as part of the COVID-19 recovery efforts presents several challenges:

- **Crisis of Care**

In Latin America and the Caribbean, before the crisis, women dedicated three times more than men to unpaid care work. The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this unequal distribution of the burden due to temporary closure of educational and care centers, pressure on health systems, longer time and more activities carried out in homes.

A significant exit of women from the workforce was due to attend the increasing demands of care in their homes. Up to now, many of them were not able to resume their jobs.

The "crisis of care" (*crisis de los cuidados*) is a structural gap that urgently needs to be addressed in order to build more equitable post Covid societies. Globally, unpaid care work is cited as the principal reason given by working-age women for being outside the labor force. Furthermore, the gender roles that foster the unequal distribution of care responsibilities and of non-remunerated work between men and women within households translate from family dynamics into the labor market structure, generating unequal opportunities to participate in paid activities.

Investing in care is key to the economic and social recovery of our two regions. A new social pact for care is urgently needed, a new social contract that incorporates care as a fundamental pillar of social protection. It is not only necessary, it is also smart because investment in care generates a triple dividend: it improves children's capabilities, it generates a return in taxes through the creation of jobs in the care sector, and it expands family income.

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated this unequal distribution of the burden due to temporary closure of educational and care centers, pressure on health systems, longer time and more activities carried out in homes.

- **Informality**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, precariousness of employment and unemployment has increased. The increase in informality is noticed in the loss of formal jobs, which generates a loss of livelihood almost immediately. Specifically, 77.5%* of women in the region who work in domestic employment operate informally.

An estimated 1.6 billion informal economy workers – that is, 76 percent of informal workers globally — were significantly impacted by the lockdown measures and/or working in the hardest-hit sectors such as accommodation and food services. Among them, women were overrepresented in high-risk sectors: 42 per cent of women workers were working in those sectors, compared to 32 percent of men. In Latin America, according to ILO data, 50.2% of the 126 million women that conform the female labor force, work in informal conditions, usually implying job instability, low income, lack of protection and rights.

- **Digitalization of the economy and the gender digital gap**

The COVID-19 pandemic and the measures adopted to mitigate its spread have accelerated the digital transformation of the region's societies and the link with the digital economy.

In this context, girls, women, and vulnerable groups are least likely to have access to technology. This was already a dire disadvantage, and now, as the COVID-19 pandemic has moved so many aspects of daily life online, this lack of connectivity has become even more alarming. In low- and middle-income countries, 433 million women are unconnected and 165 million fewer women own a mobile phone compared with men. Boys are 1.5 times more likely to own a phone than girls in many countries.

The acceleration of digitalization in practically all activities of life from the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic brings opportunities, but also great challenges for the economic autonomy of women. The intersection between poverty, the digital gap and gender inequality undermines the opportunities of women within the first income quintiles as a result of the acceleration of the digital economy.

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**DECENT WORK AND
ECONOMIC GROWTH**



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**GENDER
EQUALITY**

