

ENSURING THE ECONOMIC POWER OF FRONTLINE HEALTH WORKERS:

IMPLEMENTING INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS TO PROTECT AND PROMOTE WOMEN'S ECONOMIC AND LABOR RIGHTS

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Several recently enshrined or currently negotiated global compacts target protection of women's economic and labor rights—a crucial step to fully utilizing the potential impact of frontline health workers for women in low-income settings worldwide.

Sustainable Development Goals¹

Several of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) include language related to the protection and promotion of women's economic labor rights. **SDG 1** targets, by 2030, to "end poverty in all its forms everywhere," and a sub-goal is to "ensure that all men and women, in particular the poor and the vulnerable, have equal rights to economic resources, as well as access to basic services." **SDG 4** targets "equal access for all women and men to affordable and quality technical, vocational and tertiary education, including university," as well as "eliminating gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training." **SDG 8** promotes "sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all." It also targets "productive employment and decent work for all women and men," as well as "equal pay for work of equal value" as well as the protection of labor rights and the promotion of "safe and secure working environments for all workers."

¹ The targets in bold have particular relevance for FLHWs economic and labor rights.

The target of SDG 5 is to “achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.” Sub-targets are:

- 5.1 **End all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere.**
- 5.2 **Eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls** in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- 5.3 Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.
- 5.4 **Recognize and value unpaid care and domestic work** through the provision of public services, infrastructure and social protection policies and the promotion of shared responsibility within the household and the family as nationally appropriate.
- 5.5 Ensure **women’s full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision-making** in political, economic and public life.
- 5.6 Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.
- 5.a Undertake **reforms to give women equal rights to economic resources**, as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws.
- 5.b Enhance the use of enabling technology , in particular information and communications technology, to promote the empowerment of women.
- 5.c Adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls at all levels.

Commission on the Status of Women (excerpt)

60th Session, 14-24 March 2016

“Women’s empowerment and the link to sustainable development”

Draft agree-upon conclusions

Poverty

CSW 60: PP8. The Commission expresses concern that the feminization of poverty persists and emphasizes that the eradication of poverty in all its forms and dimensions, and acknowledges the mutually reinforcing links between the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls and the eradication of poverty, and the need to ensure an adequate standard of living for women and girls throughout the lifecycle, including through social protection systems.

Economic empowerment

PP10. The Commission recognizes that women's equal economic rights, economic empowerment and independence are essential to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development... to realize the equal rights of women and men, as well as girls and boys where applicable, to access economic and productive resources, ... including ... women's equal opportunities for full and productive employment and decent work, and equal pay for equal work or work of equal value.

PP11. The Commission further recognizes that achievement of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development requires the full integration of women into the formal economy, including through their effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership at all levels of decision making in political, economic and public life and through changing the current gender-based division of labor to ensure that unpaid care and domestic work is equally shared, and recognized, reduced and redistributed.

Economic empowerment and decent work²

Sub7. Promote women's economic rights and independence, women's right to work and rights at work through gender-responsive policies and programs that promote decent work for all; promote and respect women's and girls' right to education throughout their life cycle at all levels, especially for those most left behind create conditions that facilitate women's full participation and integration in the formal economy.

Sub7. Undertake all appropriate measures to recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work by prioritizing social protection policies, including accessible and affordable quality social services, and care services for children, persons with disabilities, older persons and persons living with HIV and AIDS, and all others in need of care, and promote the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men."

² Employment that "respects the fundamental rights of the human person as well as the rights of workers in terms of conditions of work safety and remuneration." Including respect for the physical and mental integrity of the worker in the exercise of his/her employment." The ILO says that decent work involves opportunities for work that is productive and delivers a fair income, security in the workplace and social protection for families, better prospects for personal development and social integration, freedom for people to express their concerns, organize and participate in the decisions that affect their lives and equality of opportunity and treatment for all women and men.

International Labor Standards

- C111: Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation (1958) (i.e., equality of opportunity or treatment in employment or occupation); plus General Observation Concerning Convention No. 111 on Sexual Harassment (2003).
- C100: Equality in Remuneration (1951), i.e., equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value.
- C156: Workers with Family Responsibilities (1981) concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Treatment for Men and Women Workers.
- C183: Maternity Protection (2000) promoting equality of all women in the workforce and the health and safety of the mother and child.
- C189: Domestic Workers concerning decent work.

Draft Global Strategy on Human Resources for Health: Workforce 2030³

This draft World Health Organization strategy aims to guarantee the “right of health workers to be free from gender discrimination and violence in the workplace and ensure ‘decent work for all.’”

Global Health Workforce Alliance: Integrating Community Health Workers in National Health Workforce Plans⁴

- Integrate community health workers (CHWs) fully into national HRH plans and health systems.
- Ensure that any scale-up of the CHW cadre in national health systems and/or in non-governmental initiatives makes adequate provision of the additional costs and resources required for supporting the cadre (including training, supervision, equipment and supplies, transport).
- Assure regular and sustainable remuneration stipend and, if possible, complement it with other rewards, which may include financial and non-financial incentives.
- Ensure a positive practice environment, including regular and continuous supportive supervision, health and safety issues, CHW’s information and communication needs, a clean environment, a manageable workload, and the availability of drugs/supplies/equipment.
- Establish terms of reference for selection criteria, training duration, and scope of tasks that are clearly stated, publicized and respected by all stakeholders.

³ http://www.who.int/hrh/resources/pub_globstrathrh-2030/en/

⁴ Community Health Workers Key Messages: Global Consultation on Community Health Workers. Montreux, Switzerland, 29-30 April 2010.

- Provide an ongoing continuing education framework for CHWs and, where possible, support opportunities for career advancement, considering the needs of the individual as well as the organization.