

**UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE
CONFERENCE OF EUROPEAN STATISTICIANS**

**UNECE Work Session on Gender Statistics
(Geneva, Switzerland, 26-28 April 2010)**

Working paper 4
31 March 2010

Session I B. of the provisional agenda

SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS AND THE FEMINISATION OF BAD JOBS

Note by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development¹

Invited paper

SUMMARY

This document summarizes a recent OECD Development Centre Working Paper, "Why Do So Many Women End Up in Bad Jobs? A Cross Country Assessment" (Jütting, Morrisson, and Luci, 2010), which addresses the increase in the 'feminisation of bad jobs' observed in many developing countries by looking at the role of social institutions, i.e. traditions, social norms and informal laws, in shaping labour market outcomes. By applying the newly established Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) of the OECD on 44 developing countries, the paper finds that social institutions influence to a great extent activity patterns and job quality for women. Results suggest that addressing discriminating social institutions is crucial for advancing gender equality.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. This document addresses the increasingly important issue of the "feminisation of bad quality jobs". In many developing countries undergoing an industrialisation process, an impressive number of new jobs has been created in the last decades. At the same time, many of these new jobs are characterised by poor working conditions, low levels of pay, no access to formal social security and limited chances to climb up the social ladder. The majority of these "bad quality" jobs have been taken up by women. Although women's labour participation rates are lower than men's, women are overrepresented in certain sectors that are characterised by bad working conditions (for example unskilled, temporary and/or informal work in agriculture) and women's working status is often lower than men's (for example, women work rarely as technical, professional wage-earners or employers but rather as contributing family workers).

2. The recently published OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) quantifies the social institutions discriminating against women using 12 institutional variables, ranging from

¹ Prepared by J. Jütting, C. Morrisson, A. Luci and Christopher Garroway de Coninck, OECD.

ownership rights to civil liberties, son preference, the family code and physical integrity (c.f. Branisa et al. 2009a). Branisa et al. (2009b) find that social institutions measured by the SIGI are associated with higher fertility, child and infant mortality rates as well as with lower female secondary education and inhibited good governance. Social institutions are defined as evolved practices with stable rules of behaviour that are outside the formal system and that deprive women from their basic freedoms (c.f. Sen, 2007) and consider them as critical for various development outcomes (c.f. Jütting et al. 2007).

3. Social institutions are one of the main driving forces for the “feminisation of bad jobs” as they determine women’s activity patterns and their working conditions. Patriarchal traditions and norms constrain women’s activities, for example by not allowing them to start their own businesses, by refusing them to do jobs in which they are in contact with (or are managing) men, by restricting their access to land and other property or by simply forbidding them to leave the house alone or without men’s permission. By that means, social institutions also restrict women’s access to education and information.

4. Empirical cross-country analysis, based on observations of over 40 countries from six different regions, suggests that social discrimination against women leads to a feminisation of bad jobs. We find clear evidence that discriminatory social institutions hinder women’s participation in the labour market. Furthermore, there is a positive correlation between discriminatory social institutions and gender segregation by sectors, suggesting that social institutions often confine women to the agricultural sector and hinder their progress towards jobs in industry or the service sector that often (not principally) offer better working conditions and higher pay. Moreover, discriminatory social institutions increase the proportion of women working as contributing family workers, where they are subject to the orders of the head of family and without income and independence. In addition, discriminatory social institutions hinder women from working as employees and employers; jobs that often offer better working conditions, higher pay and more independence.

II. MEASURING THE FEMINISATION OF BAD JOBS

5. The feminisation of bad jobs in developing countries is often explained by the fact that women generally have less education and less training than men and that women are less productive because of their absenteeism and rotation due to maternity and child rearing (c.f. UN, 2005; Medeiros and Costa, 2007; Fontana and Paciello, 2009; OECD, 2009). It also is very difficult for women to start their own business due to their lack of capital and access to credit and that women face barriers to education and employment due to specific handicaps like unsafe travel or insufficient facilities (c.f. World Bank, 2001; Klasen, 2002; Klasen and Lamanna, 2009). Moreover, traditional attitudes are often cited as an important obstacle, because they result in the fact that, for example, male employers despise female workers or women have lower career aspirations. However, these cultural barriers have never been explicitly measured so far. Social discrimination against women so far remains a largely unexplored part of the story.

6. Measuring job quality is a difficult undertaking, because the indicators differ mainly with the countries’ economic development stage. In developing countries, the most widely used indicator of job quality is the formality status of a job. However, taking informality as a definition for bad job quality does not go far enough, especially when one is interested in the gender gap in job quality. First of all, social discrimination against women may hinder women from working even on an informal basis. Secondly, in developing countries with low income levels, large parts of the population work, either formally or informally, in agriculture. Hence, in

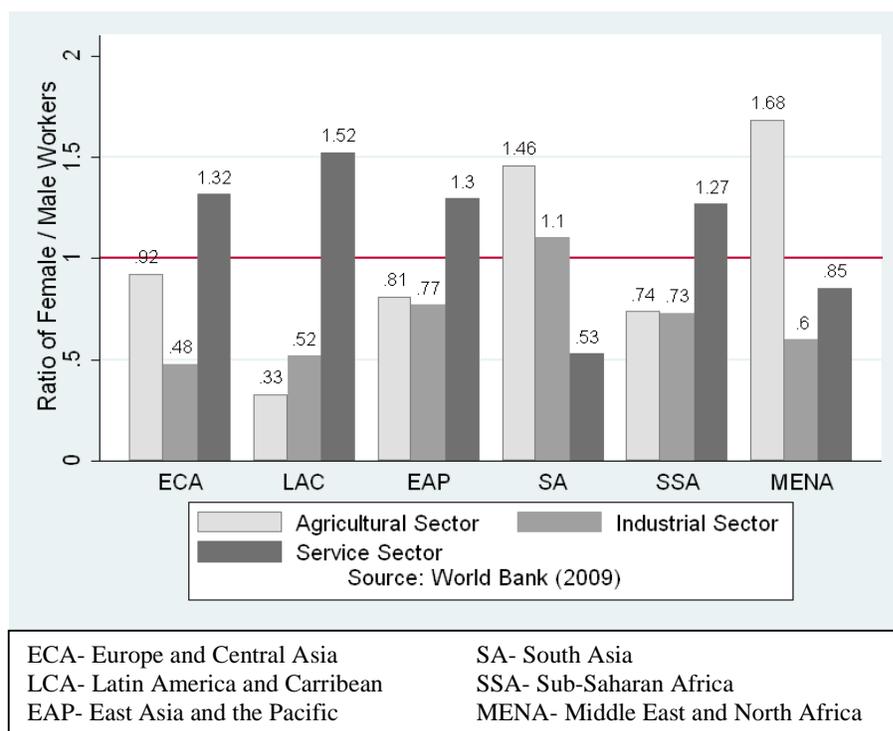
those countries job quality is best measured by women's and men's working status, i.e. work as contributing family workers, employees, employers or own account workers. In industrialising countries in contrast, job quality is less a matter of working status, but more a matter of occupation by sectors, as work in industry and services in general offers better working conditions and higher pay than work in agriculture. In order to capture these different manifestations of job quality, we measure the feminisation of bad jobs in three different ways:

- (a) women's labour market participation,
- (b) gender segregation by sectors,
- (c) gender segregation by working status.

A. Female Labour Market Participation

7. The female share of the labour force measures the share of women in the total labour (including men), whereas the female labour participation rate measures the share of working women in the female working age population only. The female share of the labour force as percentage of the total labour force varies between 18 per cent (Pakistan) and 51 per cent (Moldova) with a mean of 41 per cent over all 44 observed countries. The female labour participation rate varies between 14 per cent (Iraq) and 82 per cent (Madagascar) with a mean of 52 per cent over all countries. In all 44 countries, the ratio of the female to the male labour participation rate (RLPR) lies under 1 (0.68 on average), indicating that in all countries relatively fewer women than men are economically active. Here again, Iraq (0.19) and Madagascar (0.93) are the extremes. The gender gap in labour participation rates is the lowest in sub-Saharan Africa, followed by Europe and Central Asia and East Asia and the Pacific. The gender gap is by far the highest in the Middle East and North Africa.

Figure 1. Gender Segregation by Sectors (unweighted regional averages) (Ø 2003-2007)



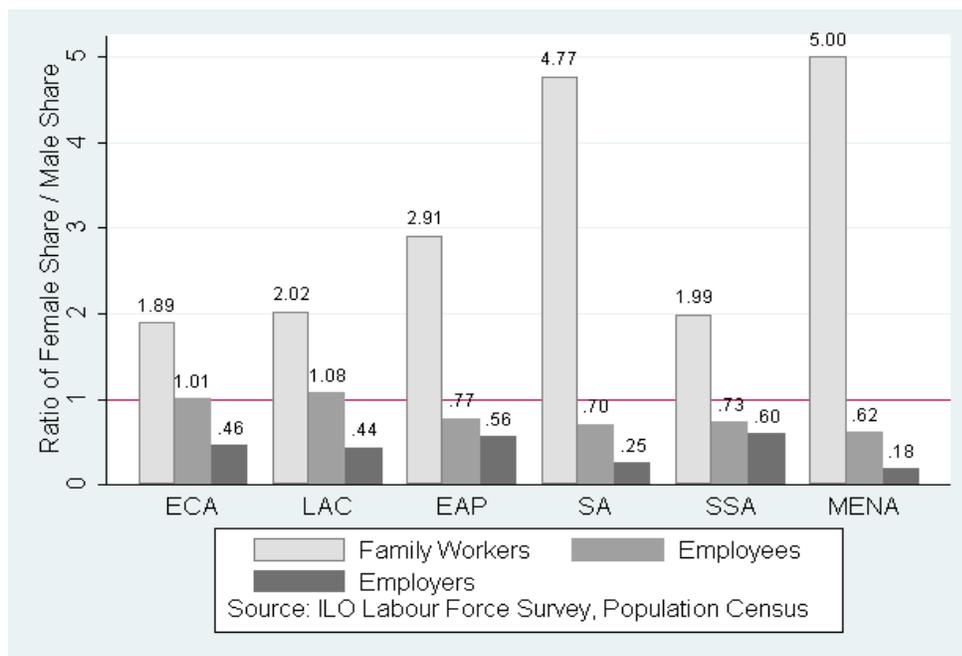
B. Gender Segregation by Sectors

8. In all regions except South Asia, women are largely underrepresented in industry. The exception of South Asia is related to the importance of export-oriented textile manufacturing in some South Asian countries with a very high proportion of women in textile. In South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa, women are largely overrepresented in agriculture. Over the last decades, in these countries the overall proportion workers in agriculture declined, but the relative ratio of female to male employees in agriculture has increased constantly, because it is mainly men who leave the agricultural sector for work in other sectors. Boserup (1970) calls this trend the “feminisation of agriculture”. However, over the last few decades women’s work in agriculture has not only effectively increased in these regions, but also has become more visible due to research and data collection that has attempted to measure more accurately women’s activities in rural areas.

9. In the other four regions, women are overrepresented in services. However, in these four regions, average figures for each region conceal exceptions: in some areas, the relative ratio of female to male employees in agriculture has increased significantly. For example in South Africa and some parts of Central and East Asia, women still tend to work in agriculture while men move to other sectors (c.f. Deere, 2005, Fontana and Paciello, 2009, Beneria, 2001, Lastarria-Cornhiell, 2003; Uni and Rani, 2000). In these areas, many married women have become the main agricultural workers in recent years, whereas men migrate out of agriculture, at least after ploughing and before returning for the harvesting season. Even in Latin America, where women work mainly in services, over the last years a feminisation of agriculture can be observed for some productions like fruit in Chile’s central valley, vegetables in Mexico, vineyards in Brazil, or flowers in Colombia (c.f. Lastarria-Cornhiell, 2006; Deere, 2005). Nevertheless, Lastarria-Cornhiel (2006) emphasises that while more and more women work in the agricultural sector in many countries, the small proportion of permanent positions and in supervision and management in agriculture is overwhelmingly held by men.

10. In comparison to work in industry and services, agricultural work generally pays little, offers no or little social protection and is characterised by harsh working conditions (c.f. Fontana and Paciello, 2009; Deere, 2005). A series of case studies, for example for Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, the Philippines or China, reveal that the increasing feminisation of agricultural occupations comes hand in hand with a feminisation of “bad quality” jobs, because workers in agriculture tend to be deprived of basic and natural resources as well as of institutional services, such as credit, market information or training, whereas workers in industry tend to have better access to education and training, new technologies and market information. Moreover, as the case studies also reveal a significant discrepancy in income, job security and working conditions between the agricultural and the industrial sector, one can conclude that as women are more likely to be stuck in the agricultural sector than men, women are disproportionately employed in low-quality jobs.

Figure 2. Gender Segregation by Working Status (yearly observations 1999-2007)



ECA- Europe and Central Asia	SA- South Asia
LCA- Latin America and Carribean	SSA- Sub-Saharan Africa
EAP- East Asia and the Pacific	MENA- Middle East and North Africa

C. Gender Segregation by Working Status

11. For countries with large agricultural sectors, such as those in sub-Saharan Africa for example, about as many men as women work in agriculture. Consequently, in these countries the gender bias in job quality is better measured using the gender segregation by working status. International Labour Organization (ILO) statistics classify the working status in four main categories: employers, employees, contributing family workers and own-account workers. The status of an employer can generally be classified as a “good quality” job because by definition the employer is in a position to pay one or more employees. Studies of the informal sector and recent data on informal employment (c.f. Morrisson et al., 1994; OECD, 2009) reveal that employers in the informal sector often earn more than employees in the formal sector. Nevertheless, in comparison to a contributing family worker, a job as an employee still can be classified as a “good quality” job, whereas the status of contributing family workers can be considered a “bad quality” job given that the person has no formal entitlement to pay and risk protection and hence fully depends on family members (c.f. Carr and Chen, 2001; Uni and Rani, 2000). The job quality of own account workers is difficult to classify, because on the one hand own account workers are independent and mostly dispose of their own property and income, but on the other hand they still work without formal entitlement and risk protection. Consequently, we ignore own account workers and consider work as employers and employees as “good jobs” and work as contributing family workers as “bad job”.

12. The high relative ratio of female to male contributing family workers and the low relative ratio of female to male employers show a clear pattern of gender inequality in terms of working status. The fact that women are relatively overrepresented as contributing family workers

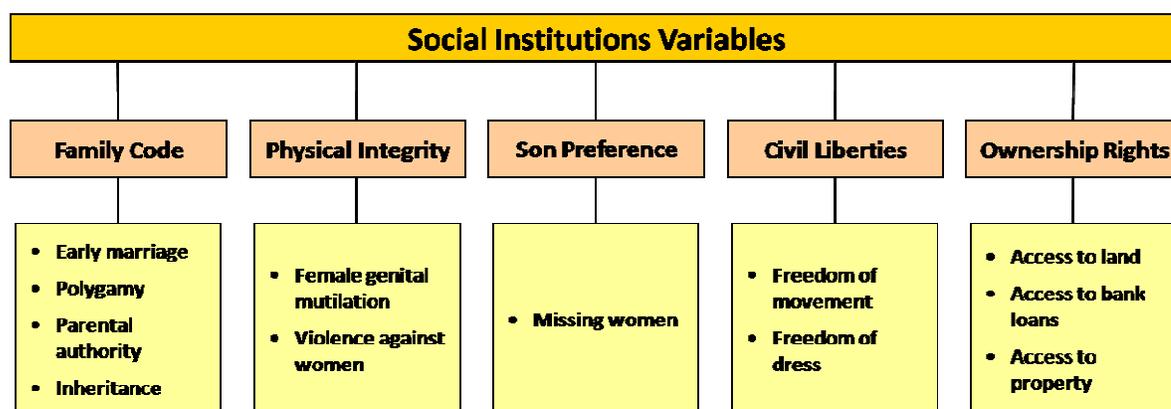
implies that women are over-represented in the most vulnerable jobs in informal occupations. Work as contributing family workers allows women to combine work with family care, but these jobs have no pay, no income security and poor working conditions. Men in contrast are more likely to work as employers, which pays and offers self-determination and independence. The data on gender segregation by sectors clearly implies that women are overrepresented in “bad quality” jobs, whereas men are overrepresented in “good quality” jobs.

III. THE IMPACT OF SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS ON THE FEMINISATION OF BAD JOBS

13. While the previous Section shows that in many regions of the world one can clearly observe a “feminisation of bad jobs”, in this Section we are concerned about the driving forces behind this phenomenon. Empirical analysis using the new OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) shows that social institutions generally affect women’s activity patterns, through labour market participation. Furthermore, estimating the impact of the SIGI and its sub-indices on the gender segregation by sectors and on the gender segregation by working status also tests the hypothesis that social discrimination against women leads to an overrepresentation of women in “bad jobs” and an underrepresentation of women in “good jobs”.

14. The new OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) quantifies patriarchal norms, rules, code of conducts, laws and traditions that produce inequalities between women and men. The five components of the SIGI – ownership rights, civil liberties, son preference, family code and physical integrity each measure one dimension of the underlying concept. The SIGI and its sub-indices are constructed by Branisa, Klasen and Ziegler (2009a) using variables from the OECD Gender, Institutions and Development Database (Morrisson and Jütting, 2005; Jütting et al., 2008). For more details, please visit <http://www.genderindex.org>

Figure 3. Construction of the OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index

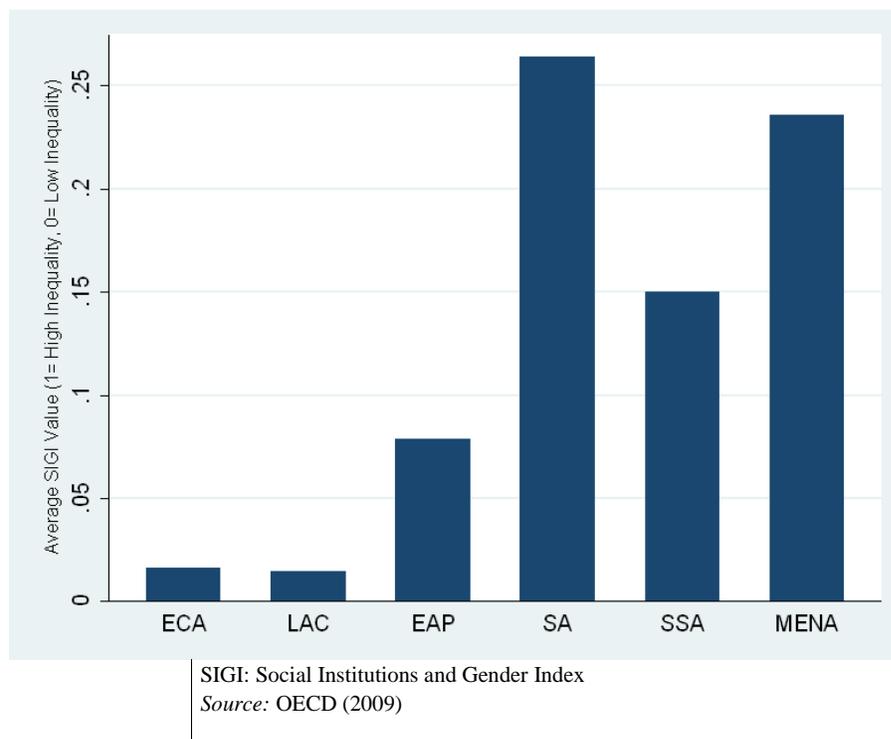


Source: OECD Development Centre, 2009.

15. The family code sub-index refers to institutions that influence the decision-making power of women in the household and includes measures of parental authority, inheritance rights, early marriage and polygamy. The civil liberties sub-index captures the freedom of social participation of women and includes measures of freedom of movement and freedom of dress. The physical integrity sub-index comprises different indicators on violence against women like domestic violence, sexual assault or rape, sexual harassment as well as female genital mutilation. The son preference sub-index reflects mainly the economic valuation of women by measuring the gender bias in mortality. The ownership rights sub-index covers the access of

women to several types of property like women’s access to land, women’s access to bank loans and women’s access to property other than land. In all cases, the variables are between 0 and 1. The value 0 means no or very low inequality and the value 1 indicates high inequality.

Figure 4. Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) Scores by Region



ECA- Europe and Central Asia	SA- South Asia
LCA- Latin America and Carribean	SSA- Sub-Saharan Africa
EAP- East Asia and the Pacific	MENA- Middle East and North Africa

16. The SIGI indicates high levels of social discrimination against women in South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa, whereas Latin America and the Caribbean as well as Europe and Central Asia show relatively low SIGI scores. Sierra Leone, Yemen, Iran, Pakistan and Iraq are the five countries with the highest social discrimination against women; Paraguay, Croatia, Kazakhstan, Argentina and Costa Rica are on the bottom of the list. On average for all 44 countries, the sub-indices suggest that women are mostly discriminated by the violation of their physical integrity. In the Middle East and North Africa, women are mostly discriminated by limited civil liberties as limited freedom of movement and limited freedom of dress (obligation to wear a veil). In South Asian countries, a significant number of missing women indicates that women are mostly discriminated by son preference. The civil liberties discrimination is also very high in this region. In sub-Saharan African countries, women suffer the most from limited ownership rights that result in restricted access to land, bank loans and property other than land.

A. The Impact of SIGI on Women's Labour Force Participation

17. Controlling for education and level of economic development, regression analyses carried out by Jütting, Morrisson, and Luci (2010) shows the SIGI has a significant negative impact on female share of the labour force, female labour participation rate and the ratio of female to male

labour participation. This implies that social discrimination against women decreases the levels of female labour market participation. Regressions based on the sub-indices of the SIGI show that the two sub-indices civil liberties and son preference are significantly associated with all measures of female labour market participation, suggesting that social discrimination against women in terms of civil liberties (freedom of movement, freedom of dress) and in terms of son preference significantly decreases female labour market participation. The SIGI coefficient (as well as the two mentioned sub-indices) stays significant when controlling for economic advancement and education. Furthermore female education has a significantly positive impact on the female share of the labour force and the ratio of the female to the male labour participation.

18. Jütting, Morrisson, and Luci (2010) also suggest that economic growth has a nonlinear impact on female labour market participation. Growth lowers female labour market participation at low stages of economic development and increases it at higher stages. This finding is in line with the “feminisation U” hypothesis. After Boserup (1970), most low-income countries are characterised by a large agricultural sector and high female labour market participation. When countries undergo a beginning economic growth process, female labour market participation declines. Urbanisation and industrialisation reduce the agricultural sector and polarise the working activities of men and women, as men move on to other sectors and women drop out of the labour market (dominating income effect). With further economic growth, women get more education and employment opportunities for women increase in other sectors than agriculture. Consequently, female labour market participation rises due to a dominating substitution effect.

19. Social institutions reduce women’s labour market activities for all stages of economic development and reinforce the decrease in women’s labour market participation during a country’s industrialisation process. As social institutions hinder women from leaving the house in order to work outside the family and from achieving education, women’s working activities are limited to the agricultural sector. Consequently, in industrialising countries that are characterised by a reduction of the rural sector and a growing demand for labour mobility and technical skills, women drop out of the labour market.

B. The Impact of SIGI on the Gender Bias in Job Quality Measured by Sector

20. In many countries, women get stuck in the agricultural sector, whereas men move on to other sectors. Controlling for fertility rates, education, and the level of economic development, Jütting, Morrisson, and Luci (2010) find that social institutions increase the relative ratio of female to male employees in the agricultural sector and decrease the relative ratio of female to male employees in service. This implies that high social discrimination against women makes it difficult for women to leave the agricultural sector and to work in service. Regressions based on the sub-indices of the SIGI show that social discrimination against women in terms of son preference, civil liberties and physical integrity significantly increases the relative ratio of female to male employees in the agricultural sector and significantly decreases the relative ratio of female to male employees in service. The impact of social institutions and its sub-indices on the relative ratio of female to male employees in industry is found to be insignificant however.

21. Fertility is also found to decrease the relative ratio of female to male agricultural workers and increases the relative ratio of female to male service employees, which may be due to the fact that women leave work in agriculture at the arrival of children and either drop out of the labour market or find less physical jobs in the service sector. Female education increases the ratio of female to males in the service sector and decreases the relative ratio of female to males in industry. This may be due to the fact that female education enables women to leave physical

labour in the agricultural and the industrial sector as well as home and care work for work in white collar sectors as services. Hence, education seems to be a sine qua non condition for women to work in service. Economic development turns out to have a negative impact on the ratio of female to male employees in agriculture and a positive impact on the ratio of female to male employees in service. This too speaks in favour of Boserup's (1970) hypothesis that economic growth reduces employment opportunities for women in the agricultural sector but creates new jobs for women in other sectors like the service sector.

22. Additionally, the relatively high explanatory power of the SIGI relative to other control variables suggests that women tend to be clustered in agriculture mainly due to patriarchal social norms, conservative cultural norms and existing institutional systems that hinder them from having access to education and training. Patriarchal norms and practices also impede women from working outside the house because work outside the house conflicts with women's family responsibilities and the social restrictions placed on women's mobility (c.f. Morrisson and Jütting, 2005; Agarwal, 2003; Rebouche, 2006). In patriarchal societies, women often have no right to leave the house for work in industry or services and can only work in the fields, as there they are among other women only and can be observed by their male family members. Consequently, women hardly have access to jobs in other sectors outside agriculture that generally offer better pay, more income security and better working conditions. For this reason, social institutions contribute significantly to the feminisation of "low-quality" jobs.

C. The Impact of SIGI on the Gender Bias in Job Quality Measured by Working Status

23. Finally, Jütting, Morrisson, and Luci (2010) also measure the impact of the SIGI and its sub-indices on the relative ratio of female to male contributing family workers, employers and employees. Work as a contributing family worker is unambiguously considered to be a "bad job" and work as an employer as a "good job". The job quality of an employee is considered as "good" in comparison to work as a contributing family worker. Social institutions are found to increase the relative ratio of female to male contributing family workers, suggesting that in many countries, helping out with farming is still seen as a woman's obligation to the family. Permanent work outside the house is likely to conflict with women's family responsibilities and thus impedes them from working as employees or employers. Social discrimination against women significantly decreases the relative ratio of female to male employers. Moreover, higher social discrimination lowers the relative ratio of female to male employees, suggesting that restrictive cultural norms impede women from working as employees; jobs which would offer women higher job quality in comparison to jobs as contributing family workers.

24. The relatively high explanatory power of the SIGI suggests that social institutions are a main factor explaining the gender segregation of contributing family workers, employers and employees. Regressions based on the sub-indices of the SIGI also show that social discrimination against women in terms of civil liberties and family code significantly increases the relative ratio of female to male contributing family workers. Furthermore, social discrimination against women in terms of son preference and physical integrity significantly decreases the relative ratio of female to male employers. Social discrimination against women in terms of civil liberties also significantly decreases the relative ratio of female to male employees, which suggests again that women's freedom of movement and dress as well as women's decision-making power in the household is crucial for women to find good quality jobs.

IV. CONCLUSION

25. The work by Jütting, Morrisson, and Luci (2010) has identified how social institutions shape employment outcomes of women through labour force participation, gender bias in employment sectors and gender bias in job status. Discriminating social institutions were found to:

- (a) Hinder women in joining the labour force outside the household for example by simply limiting their freedom of movement.
- (b) Impact on women's upward job mobility by reducing their probability to find work outside the agricultural sector, in which the working conditions are generally worse than in the industry or service.
- (c) Confine/limit women to occupations as contributing family workers, a work situation generally characterised by having no own income and social security protection.

26. Most donors and the international community at large have not yet focused on the analysis of social institutions that affect women's economic well-being and job quality. Donor intervention in social institutions is particularly difficult, in particular in the field of culturally sensitive issues like son preference, women's dress obligations (veil, burka), polygamy, genital mutilation and early marriages. In order to reduce the social discrimination of women, interventions should be designed to tackle potential male resistance from the outset. Donors can assist in reforming legal institutions that discriminate against women, e.g. property rights, inheritance laws, divorce laws and family codes. Access to information, opinion campaigns, public work and employment guarantee schemes for women as well as childcare facilities also help overcome these constraints.

27. Finally, it should be noted that measuring job quality in general and its gender bias in particular is a demanding undertaking. More research in this area is definitely needed. The widespread informality of women's work in developing countries makes it particularly difficult to use more precise and adequate measures of job quality. Hence, improving measures of job quality seems to be a fruitful area for future research. In order to create an adequate "job quality-index" for developing countries, data collection is needed especially in the fields of informal and formal employment, wages, employment security, health and safety at work, access to training, career and promotion possibilities, working hours and reconciliation possibilities, social dialogue, and the presence of gender discrimination. There is a potential huge pay-off for economies which invest more resources in this type of analysis as it would not only allow to better address long persisting gender discrimination but also unlock potential for a more balanced and sustainable growth.

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