

Box 8**Need to eliminate disparities in minimum wages rates between domestic workers and workers in other sectors**

According to ILO estimates, across the world some 42.5 per cent of domestic workers did not enjoy minimum wage coverage in 2010, despite the fact that, in the countries in which they work, minimum wages are set for other workers. Another 5.9 per cent of the domestic workers were covered by a minimum wage, but at a lower level than other workers (ILO, 2013f).

When setting a separate minimum wage rate for domestic workers on a sectoral or occupational basis, it is important that domestic work is not undervalued. In the countries under analysis by Oelz and Rani (2015), disparities were found in minimum wage rates between domestic workers and workers in other sectors. In the Philippines in 2013, the monthly minimum wage of domestic workers was one fifth that of workers in the non-agricultural sector in the national capital region. In Mali, minimum wages are determined for seven categories of domestic workers and the lowest category receives two thirds of the wages of the highest category and is lower than that of the national minimum wage. In South Africa, the monthly or hourly minimum wage of the domestic worker is only 60 per cent of that of a contract cleaning sector worker. In India, the minimum wages for domestic workers is lower than that of the cleaning workers, who are the lowest paid. Despite the low minimum wage set for domestic workers in the countries examined, including Brazil, Costa Rica, India, Mali, South Africa and Turkey, the compliance rate is less than 50 per cent in the majority of the countries.

Seeking to address this situation, the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189) calls for the inclusion of domestic workers in minimum wage coverage and effective measures for ensuring compliance. Article 11 of Convention No. 189 requires ratifying States to take measures “to ensure that domestic workers enjoy minimum wage coverage, where such coverage exists, and that remuneration is established without discrimination based on sex” (Oelz, 2014). In addition, countries ratifying Convention No. 189 are required to ensure that only “a limited proportion of the remuneration of domestic workers” can be paid in the form of in-kind payment (Article 12). Since then, several countries have included domestic workers under minimum wage coverage with a view to remedying the issue of their low pay (Oelz and Rani, 2015).

Box 9**Collective bargaining to address the gender wage gap**

In Austria in 2005, while collective bargaining coverage was about 99 per cent, at the lowest decile of earnings the gender wage gap reached 31 per cent, which was partly attributed to differential minimum rates in sectoral collective bargaining agreements. Minimum rates in female-dominated sectors were consistently lower than those where males dominated. To address this disparity, social partners negotiated a cross-sector minimum wage. In Sweden, observing that sectors with the lowest minimum wage had the largest proportion of female employees, the social partners agreed to increase the minimum wage through collective bargaining. In Sri Lanka, following the reactivation of wage boards, including for the tobacco and cinnamon industries, the new wage rates were no longer differentiated by sex.

These developments notwithstanding, the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations emphasized that this was insufficient to ensure that the process was free from gender bias and pointed out that, in defining different jobs and occupations in wage board ordinances, sex-specific terminology remained in use in many cases, reinforcing stereotypes regarding whether certain jobs should be carried out by men or women, and thus increasing the likelihood of wage inequality.

Source: Sobeck, 2015.

4. Promoting and normalizing good quality part-time work

In order substantially to improve the quality of part-time employment and to normalize it so that it becomes an accepted working time arrangement available to enterprises and all workers, both women and men, a broad range of policies is needed. The Part-time Work Convention, 1994 (No. 175) calls for the adoption of the principle of equal treatment of part-time workers on a pro-rata wages and benefits basis comparable to that accorded to full-time employees. This is of fundamental importance in redressing the inequalities associated with part-time work.

In addition, statutory thresholds on access to effective labour and social protections should take into account the specific needs and working conditions of informal and non-standard workers, and also those of domestic workers. For instance, while there are labour laws protecting domestic workers in Brazil and the Netherlands, many do not enjoy those protections because they work below the threshold of two days per week for a single employer. Accordingly, qualifying thresholds should be measured taking into account the total working hours performed by an individual worker.