

How can public policy enhance female employment and empower women economically as countries urbanize?

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Abbreviations

ACWF	All-China Women's Federation
BDS	Business Development Services
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
CDIA	Cities Development Initiative for Asia
CESR	Centre for Economic and Social Rights
CPAN	Chronic Poverty Advisory Network
DFID	Department for International Development
EPAG	Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young women
FIFA	International Federation of Football Association
GTZ	German Technical cooperation Agency
ILO	International Labour Organisation
ISTARN	Informal Sector Training and Resources Network
ITC	International Trade Centre
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner Human Rights
PSNP	Productive Safety Net Programmes
SADSAWU	South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union
SDP	Sustainable Dar es Salaam Project
SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNESCO	United Nations Educational Scientific Cultural Organisation
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNW	United Nations
WB	World Banks
WDR	World Development Report
WIEGO	Women in Informal Employment Globalizing and Organizing

1 Overview

1.1 Urbanisation, female labour participation and women economic empowerment

Economic development is characterised by two interlinked processes: urbanisation and greater women's participation in the workforce. As countries' economic activities are reallocated across agriculture, manufacturing and services, and gender and household relations are altered by the demographic transition, more workers move to cities where economic activities are concentrated, and more women enter the workforce. In the last decades, increase in female labour force participation has been larger in poor countries which are rapidly urbanising (Chant, 2014). However, differences between regions persist: female labour force participation is lowest in the Middle East and North Africa (26 percent) and South Asia (35 percent) and highest in East Asia and Pacific (64 percent) and Sub-Saharan Africa (61 percent) (WDR, 2012).

Female participation in the labour force has also been characterised by a decrease in the share of women engaged in contributing family work (mostly agriculture) and an increase in the share of wage and salaried female workers globally (by 12 percentage points between 1995 and 2015) (ILO, 2016). This trend has been especially remarkable in East Asia, where the share of female salaried workers increased from 26.3 in 1995 to 53.4 in 2005, and in South East Asia and Pacific Region for which the share increased from 30.4 to 40.9 over the same period (ILO, 2016). The share of women in wage employment remains relatively low, however, in Sub-Saharan Africa (21.4%) and in South Asia (20%) (ILO, 2016) due to economic, social and cultural factors. In the Middle East and North Africa and in South Asia barriers to entry to the labour market and cultural restrictions constrain work opportunities for young women and their ability to combine work and family life (Elder and Kring, 2016). In Sub-Saharan Africa, urbanisation has been less associated with rapid economic growth and creation of wage employment and productive urban jobs than in East Asia (WDR, 2012/13).

Despite regional differences in their incidence, urbanisation and labour force participation can be powerful drivers of women economic empowerment, intended as 'the process which increases women's real power over economic decisions that influence their lives and priorities in society'. Women's economic empowerment can be achieved through equal access to and control over critical economic resources and opportunities, and the elimination of structural gender inequalities in the labour market including a better sharing of unpaid care work'. In this sense, economic empowerment is just one of the multiple aspects of women empowerment, which has to do with the power relations which influence women's capacity to participate in and influence the development process.

Women living in cities can be empowered by the greater access to economic, political, social and cultural opportunities. However, living and working in cities can also have disempowering and exclusionary effects and create additional challenges in the lives of women, including enhanced vulnerability to economic shocks because of loss of traditional (community) support systems, more precarious working conditions, and more unsafe and insecure environments (Brouder and Sweetman, 2015; Tacoli and Satterthwaite, 2013). Even in the urban labour market they still face discrimination which relegates them in lower-paying and low-status segments of the occupational hierarchy. Further, the greater access to paid work associated with life in cities is not in itself a guarantee of economic empowerment. Disempowering effects accrue to working women because of: their concentration in the informal sector which excludes from social provisions and most labour legislation; the persistent gender pay gap and the undiminished burden of unpaid care work, often aggravated in cities because of long distances, congested traffic, diminished family support and poor housing infrastructure

1.2 Methodology

This Helpdesk Review, carried out under the DFID Economics and Private Sector Professional Evidence and Applied Knowledge Services (EPS-PEAKS) framework, seeks to understand **how public policy can enhance female employment and empower women economically as countries urbanize**.

The focus of this paper is on poor urban women in developing countries, and reviews the empowering and disempowering effects of urbanisation on the four main **areas of work** performed by women in cities:

- Paid wage work
- Paid care work
- Unpaid care work
- Self-employment

Then, the review analyses the interventions which have been implemented to support five types of female (poor and near-poor) **urban livelihoods**:

- Wage work in manufacturing
- Self-entrepreneurship
- Home-based workers
- Street traders
- Paid domestic workers

These livelihoods were chosen for two interconnected reasons: first, evidence suggests that they are the most common livelihoods undertaken by poor and near-poor working women in cities; second, evidence exists of interventions specifically aimed at improving these livelihoods. In fact, the paper seeks to identify interventions which have helped (or which can help) women engaged in these activities to undertake trajectories of empowerment and poverty escape. Some of the interventions discussed were not specifically targeted to women, but were included in the discussion because women constitute the majority of workers in the targeted employment category.

Finally, the discussion is brought around two cross-sectional areas of intervention (childcare and urban transports) which can contribute to women economic empowerment by facilitating their engagement in paid and unpaid work.

When possible, the review offers evidence of policy interventions which worked in improving the (economic) lives of women in cities, and insights on which livelihoods have the most potential to empower women. However, this type of evidence is scant, as most of the literature focuses on analysing the problems and constraints faced by urban women, and discussing areas of necessary interventions, less so on tracking progress and identifying its policy drivers. As a consequence, the evidence reviewed in this paper is not comprehensive across all issues and developing regions, and more work may be necessary to adapt the findings to each specific developing contexts.

1.3 Key findings and policy recommendations¹

- In urban contexts, women's access to the labour market does not systematically mean that they will be empowered.
- Formal wage employment is likely to be the most empowering form of work because it guarantees access to social provisions and stable income, but it is also the least available form of livelihoods to women, especially poor women.

¹ The policy recommendations are discussed in more detail in section 5.

Women are overrepresented in the informal sector, which means that they do not benefit from fixed working hours and wages, labour regulation and social protection. **Measures to protect the rights of women in the informal sector are necessary.**

- Women entrepreneurs in developing countries face a number of constraints which prevent their business activities from being drivers of economic empowerment. They suffer from discriminatory practices, lack of mobility, restricted access to financial support, lower technical skills and stereotypical attitudes. **Interventions are needed in order to increase investments in education and vocational trainings tailored to women's needs, facilitate business registration and taxation systems, provide financial support and services tailored to women-led enterprises, including informal and microbusiness activities.**
- Home-based work is one of the main occupations for women living in developing countries' cities, because it is more compatible with care work duties and gender norms which require them to stay at home. Because they are mostly invisible and unorganised, they are neglected and unrecognised by policies and urban planning. **Interventions are needed in order to overcome their isolation, implement studies to better understand their roles and needs, recognition of their labour rights, support with housing improvements and provide health education and business training.**
- Street trade is mostly a female and is more visible than other informal occupations and for this reason it is often object of harassment and risk of eviction. **Some successful interventions have focused on taking into account street vendors needs when undertaking urban spatial planning, advocating the needs of street traders works best with multi-faceted advocacy campaign and building women's organisational capacity, their leadership and decision-making power within street trader organisations, as they are often excluded from leadership.**
- Paid care work is an important and expanding source of wage employment for urban women. This category of wage employment is often informal and of low quality; young girls and migrant women are especially vulnerable to abuse. **Improving domestic workers' status, wages and working conditions can be achieved through: recognition of domestic work as a profession, formalisation and extension of labour rights to domestic workers, the implementation of minimum wages and the support of domestic work organisation, including through civil society groups and trade unions.**
- Unpaid domestic work remains a quintessential component of women's life in cities and is often compounded by additional difficulties, such as: higher cost of food, water and transport than in rural areas, inadequate shelter, often characterised by overcrowding, insecurity of tenure and lack of access to water and sanitation. Empowering women requires the recognition, reduction, and redistribution of care work duties. **Interventions in this sense include: research and statistics to make unpaid work visible including through time-use surveys; better provision of public services, especially childcare; investment in time saving technology and infrastructure such as electricity and urban transport; strengthening and enforcement of maternal and paternal leave.**
- There are two cross-cutting areas of intervention which are here identified as priorities in order to facilitate women's engagement in paid work and reduce the burden of unpaid care work:
 - Better access to urban transport infrastructures through women only transportation, women friendly pricing systems, urban transport projects

and the inclusion of women in participatory consultations to improve urban planning.

- Access to childcare services through community based care options, work-based nurseries and care homes, state parental or carer support transfers, and dedicated private and/or public facilities

The interventions in support of women's urban livelihoods reviewed in the paper all point towards the importance of some key areas:

- i Strengthening of labour legislation and labour standards, including minimum wages, and their extension to informal sector activities.
- ii Recognising the informal activities performed by women in cities, and their inclusion into statistics, planning and policy making, legislation and social security. Research, including participatory research is fundamental for this.
- iii Reinforcing social protection for women in both the formal and the informal sector
- iv Strengthening the organisational capacity of women, especially of poor working women, so that they can better advocate their instances.
- v Implementing participatory strategies which involve all interested stakeholders and promote dialogue between workers and local governments. Paid work can be empowering only if the unpaid care work duties are diminished and the burden distributed in a more just way between men and women, and between households, communities and the state. Creating adequate childcare services which are accessible also to poor women engaged in the informal sector is essential. Improving the infrastructure facilities (including water and sanitation, housing and transport) that women use in performing their (paid and unpaid) work tasks can enhance the empowering effect of this work.

2 The four economic roles of women in cities: empowering and disempowering factors

Women living in cities are more likely to take part to the workforce and be employed outside the house than their rural counterparts. However, even in the urban labour market they still face discrimination which relegates them in lower-paying and low-status segments of the occupational hierarchy (UNRISD, 2010; Oxfam, 2011).

Women are disproportionately employed in the informal sector (Chen et al., 2005; Tacoli, 2012; Vanek et al., 2014). In 15 out of 43 countries with comparable data (6 in sub-Saharan Africa and in Latin America and the Caribbean, respectively, and 3 in Southern and South-Eastern Asia), informal employment accounted for more than 70 per cent of total female non-agricultural employment. In most countries, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean and sub-Saharan Africa, the share of informal non-agricultural employment is higher for women than for men, and they are also more likely than men to be engaged in part-time employment (UN, 2015). The concentration of women in the informal sector undermines women economic empowerment because it is formal employment which has the largest transformative impact on women's lives (Kabeer, 2013).

Further, women tend to be overrepresented among the more disadvantaged and vulnerable categories of employment, such as domestic workers, piece-rate home-based workers (e.g. garment-making, packaging, beedi rollers), assistants in small family enterprises (UN, 2015), as well as waste-pickers and street vendors (see Figure 1). These last two activities in particular are taken up by the poorest women living in slums in all regions, as documented by the work of WIEGO². Domestic work is a major occupational category for urban women in all regions, and trading activities account for an equal share of women's informal employment than men's in all regions, except for Middle East, North Africa and South Asia (Vanek et al., 2014). Very few women work in informal construction and transportation activities, with the exception of female construction workers in South Asia (Vanek et al., 2014). This distribution of women's informal employment by branch of economic activity is visible in survey data on urban informal employment collected in urban areas of 10 developing countries between 2001 and 2003 and analysed by WIEGO (Herrera et al., 2012). In five cities, more than half of women in informal non-agricultural employment work in trade. Engagement in non-trade services ranges from 20.4 per cent in Lomé to 49.4 per cent in Lima; differences are even larger for manufacturing, with 9.4 per cent of women in informal employment engaged in manufacturing activities in Bamako, against 40.7 per cent in Niamey (see Table 1).

² WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing) is a global network of membership-based organizations (MBOs) of informal workers, researchers and practitioners which seeks to increase the voice, visibility and validity of the working poor, especially women, and to strengthen their livelihoods in the informal economy. To this end, WIEGO has conducted abundant research on poor women's urban livelihoods, focusing on four categories: domestic workers, street vendors, home-based workers and waste-pickers. The abundant evidence so generated suggests that through the world this are indeed the livelihoods where poor urban women are more likely to be found.

Table 1: Women’s Informal Employment in Branch of Economic Activity as Per Cent Distribution of Non-Agricultural Employment

	Trade	Street trade*	Nontrade services	Transport*	Construction	Manufacturing
Niamey, Niger	37.5	14.7	21	1.2	0.4	40.7
Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso	52.5	17	26	0.9	0.4	20.8
Bamako, Mali	66.3	28.8	23.9	0.3	0.3	9.4
Dakar, Senegal	47.2	17.6	40.9	0.8	0.7	10.9
Abidjan, Ivory Coast	57	23.5	30.6	1.3	0.3	12.1
Lomé, Togo	63.9	35.6	20.4	0.9	0.1	15.5
Cotonou, Benin	62	27.1	25.6	0.3	0.1	12.3
Antananarivo, Madagascar	38.2	18.7	42.8	0.2	0.3	18.6
Lima, Peru’	37.9	11.8	49.4	2.5	0.2	12.6
Hanoi, Viet Nam	47.4	24	33.2	0.3	2.1	17.2
Ho Chi Minh City, Viet nam	36.9	16.5	39.2	0.5	0.6	23.3

* Street trade is a component of trade; transport is a component of non-trade services
 Source: Herrera et al., 2012: 7

Figure 1: Segmentation of Informal Employment by Average Earnings and Sex



Source: Chen et al (2005: 54)

Although the gender pay gaps has been declining over time in most (developed and developing) countries, it remains relevant in all countries with available data (WB, 2012; UN, 2015). Evidence suggest that the gender pay gap is smaller in the public sector and larger in informal compared to formal employment (UN Women, 2015), and large for workers without education but even larger for those with secondary and postsecondary education (Nopo et al., 2011). It is also often larger in urban than in rural areas (UNW,

2015), possibly because the wider range of employment opportunities offered by cities also comes with greater pay differentials (King-Dejardin and Bigotta, 2009). For example, in South Asia, urban women earn 42 per cent less than their male counterparts; while rural women earn 28 per cent less than rural men. This is due to the fact that women are more likely to take up a job in the informal sector, which offers lower wages, and to the fact that, within the informal sector, women tend to be clustered in the less remunerative activities (Nopo et al., 2011; UN Women, 2015).

The factors which push women at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy in both formal and informal sectors are their lower endowments in terms of financial, physical and human capital, and the inability to afford care for their dependants – children, elderly relatives or disabled family members. The daily struggles to combine paid with domestic care work leaves little time for activities such as capacity-building, training or self-help collective actions, while the precarious work conditions reduce their ability to save for old age, contribute to a pension or financially cover unpaid periods of ill-health (Oxfam, 2011).

2.1 Wage employment

Wage employment in developing countries can be conceptualised as a continuum encompassing 'bad' jobs at one end of the spectrum (poorly paid, highly exploitative and often demeaning work) and 'good jobs' at the other, characterised by formality of contract, decent working conditions, regularity of pay along with social and legal protection (Kabeer, 2012). Wage employment opportunities faced by women in urban areas tend to be closer to the 'good jobs' end of the spectrum, where the empowering effects are stronger, compared to farm and rural non-farm wage employment.

An important component of female urban wage employment, often associated with the migration of unskilled workers from rural areas, are manufacturing jobs, especially in the garment sector. Countries with a growing export-oriented manufacturing sector typically have high rates of female wage employment, as the sector shows a preference for hiring women, because they are seen as a docile and reliable workforce which can be paid lower wages than men with no productivity losses (Barrientos et al., 2004; Razavi et al., 2004; UN Habitat, 2010). The globalisation of production and the adoption of export-oriented growth strategies by many developing and merging countries has been a critical factor pushing the entrance of women in wage employment. Multinational corporations (MNCs) started outsourcing their production to East Asian and later South-East Asian countries in the 1960s, with intensification in the 1980s and 1990s, to take advantage of the lower cost and less unionized labour in those countries. The process then expanded progressively to Latin America and the Caribbean, South Asia and parts of sub-Saharan Africa (Barrientos, et al., 2004). For example, throughout the 2000s in Cambodia, FDIs in the garment sector led to the creation of approximately 700,000 jobs, 43% of them taken by migrant women with no education (Dasgupta et al 2011). In Viet Nam, women constitute 81.6 percent of the workforce in the garment industry, and 83.7% of the total workforce are migrants from rural areas (ILO, 2012a).

There is mixed evidence concerning the empowering effects of wage employment generated by these processes (Kabeer and Mahmud 2004; Barrientos et al., 2004; Kabeer, 2012). In many contexts, wage employment in manufacturing has been an agent of change, expanding women's employment prospects and their sense of self-worth, providing a relatively stable source of income and increasing their bargaining power at home. Studies suggest that women who have worked in the sector have experienced different forms of social, political and economic empowerment, some of which have also been reflected in broader societal change, in contexts as varied as Bangladesh; China; Mexico and Latin America more generally; Taiwan; Philippines (see Barrientos et al 2004 and the literature quoted there). In Bangladesh, for example, the presence of women traveling to and from work has led to the 'feminisation of public space', challenging social

restrictions on women's public mobility and access to public institutions (Hossain, 2011). Women have become visible in cities where public space was male-dominated until the early 1980s (Hossain, 2011).

However, working in factories has also several disempowering effects. Women in the sector tend to suffer from wage gap, long working hours and unsafe working conditions (ILO, 2014b). In countries such as Bangladesh, the garment sector has strategically focused on women employment to reduce production costs, offering women lower pay, worst working conditions and lower promotion prospects than men (Hossain, 2011). Several studies suggest that low female wages were a key factor driving growth and industrialisation in the East Asian economies, because they contributed to keep the costs of exports down, enabling the acquisition of technology and increasing their competitiveness (Seguino, 2000a, 2000b, 2005). Women also suffer from (sexual and non-sexual) harassment within factories as well as on their routes to work (Hossain, 2011). The garment factory career is also often quite short - about 5 years, because of the hardship that it imposes and because it is incompatible with the domestic care duties of married life (Hossain, 2011). This prevents women to reach full economic independence and to progress in their career. Another important issue is that in recent years many countries (including Mexico, India, and parts of East Asia) have been experiencing a 'defeminisation' of manufacturing wage employment (Barrientos et al., 2004; Ghosh 2007; UNRISD 2010), whereby the share of female employment has declined following the relocation of productive activities in countries with lower labour costs, or the adoption of more capital intensive technologies which have displaced workers. This upgrade process has affected women more than men, largely in reason of their lower skill level.

Overall, evidence suggests that the experience of women in manufacturing wage employment has been quite diversified across countries and that it has evolved over time, according to the specific policy context and with the adoption of gender-equity and labour-friendly legislation (Razavi et al., 2004; Barrientos et al., 2004 UNRISD, 2010; UN-Habitat, 2011). Examples of policies and interventions which have improved the empowering impact of manufacturing wage employment are reviewed in section 2.2.

2.2 Self-employment and female-owned businesses

Women are highly entrepreneurial. Women-owned businesses comprise up to 38% of all registered small businesses worldwide, and the number of women-owned businesses in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America is growing rapidly (DFID, 2010). In Vietnam, women manage around 30% of its approximately 3 million non-agricultural household businesses and around 24% of the 113,352 incorporated enterprises (Rodgers and Menon, 2010). The 2010 Global Entrepreneurship Monitoring survey found Ghana, unlike any other country where the survey was conducted, had more women than men starting a business (Quartey et al., 2014). Women entrepreneurship may have a number of empowering effects: evidence suggests that providing young women and poor and non-poor girls with access to economic assets and developing their skillsets may improve their ability to generate an income, increase the amount they can save, support their participation in school and increase their sexual health knowledge (Dickson and Bangpan, 2012).

However, women usually face additional constraints to those faced by men in carrying out these activities and in competing in markets, such as lack of mobility, lower capacity and technical skills, discriminatory practices – for example in land and property inheritance, and stereotypical attitudes the family and wider community. For these reasons, they have limited access to financial support and are often unable to run the operations required to run a business (Kabeer, 2012; Mariotti and Shepherd, 2015). Globally, more than a billion women have no interaction with a bank or financial service provider and over 70% of

women-led SMEs are either un-served or underserved financially (Women's World Banking, 2014). Many studies show that women-run businesses perform poorly when compared to men-run ones (see Campos et al., 2015 and the literature reviewed there). One key reason of this worst performance is the concentration in sectors of activity with lower value added, such as hotels and restaurants, wholesale and retail trade and other personal services (Bardasi, Sabarwal and Terrell, 2011; Campos et al., 2015).

Self-employment is often chosen by women because it is more compatible with their domestic care duties: they are in a better position to decide when to work, for how long, and whether to bring their children with them. This greater flexibility however comes at the cost of informality and low remunerability of their activities. Self-employed poor urban women are often engaged in extremely marginal and insecure activities, such as waste picking and home-based work which are not drivers of economic empowerment. Further, self-employment and entrepreneurship are often default options due to lack of better employment opportunities, and not a deliberate choice (Kabeer, 2012). Where women's entrepreneurial activities are the results of a 'forced choice', and are dictated by considerations other than the profitability of their enterprise, the chances for growth and poverty escape are greatly diminished (Emran et al., 2007).

2.3 Paid domestic work

A major category of employment for women in urban areas is paid house work: ease of entry and accommodation provided by the employer make it attractive, especially for vulnerable categories such as young migrant women (Tacoli, 2012) Low wages, social isolation, limited rights protection and potential abuse by employers make this type of activity potentially disempowering. It also underscores the fact that even in cities, social reproductive work remains mostly a responsibility of women, either paid or unpaid.

Paid domestic workers are almost exclusively female. The majority of them received a poor education and have immigrated from a rural to an urban area. The low qualification requirements induce a concentration of very low skilled workers in this sector. The working conditions are tough for these young and vulnerable migrants. In China for example, 90% of paid domestic workers are female, 83% of which have only a primary or middle school education. Thirty-five percent have work 10 hours per day, or more and 28% do not get weekends off (ILO, n.a). Quite commonly, these workers suffer from an unfamiliarity with the urban life (D'Sousza, 2010) and a lack of training which makes their working environment dangerous and can have serious consequences on their physical and mental health (ILO, n.a).

Domestic workers very rarely sign a formal contract with their employer. As a result, their wages cannot be secured, their working hours are not legally fixed and they do not benefit from any form of social protection. As a result, employers easily ignore the rights of the workers and take advantage of the financial pressure on the workers which can lead to exploitation and abuse. The fact that domestic workers often live with their employers makes their situation even more critical. There are cases where employers retain the workers identity papers, making it impossible for them to quite the job and escape the abusive working relationship (D'Sousza, 2010). Social isolation and lack of network increases the vulnerability of young female migrant workers in this sector (Tacoli and Satterthwaite, 2013)

2.4 Unpaid care work

Unpaid care work encompasses direct care of people, such as child care or care of dependent adults, and the domestic work that facilitates caring for people, such as cooking, cleaning or collecting water or firewood (Esquivel, 2013). It remains a quintessential component of women's life in cities, where increasing female participation

in paid work has not been matched - or only marginally so - by an increase in domestic labour and unpaid care work performed by men (McDowell et al., 2006; Chant, 2007). Care work in urban areas is often compounded by additional difficulties which add layers of responsibilities on women's shoulders, such as: higher cost of food, water and transport than in rural areas, inadequate shelter, often characterised by overcrowding, insecurity of tenure and lack of access to water and sanitation (UN-Habitat, 2013; Tacoli 2012). The burden of care work often leads to time poverty, poor health and well-being, limited mobility, and perpetuation of women's unequal status in society (Esquivel, 2013). Care work can prevent girls from completing their education and limit the employment opportunities which can be captured by women, contributing to explain gender gaps in labour force participation, quality of employment and wages (OECD, 2014).

Interventions to reduce the burden of unpaid care work for women and distribute its costs and benefits in a more equitable (and efficient) way encompass three/four areas: recognition, reduction, redistribution (Elson, 2008; Esquivel, 2013). Table 2 summarises some potential interventions.

- **Recognition of unpaid care**, making it visible in research and statistics (for example using time-budget surveys and embedding time-use modules within household surveys; OECD, 2014) and acknowledging its importance in a country's economy - including the urban economy. Recognition also means understanding the social norms and gender stereotypes that in each context make women the primary providers of unpaid care work (Esquivel, 2013).
- **Reduction of unpaid care work** so that the burden of certain tasks is reduced. An important dimension of this is the better provision of public services, child care and care for the elderly (childcare is discussed in more detail in section 2.3). Critical are also investment in time saving technology and infrastructure, to reduce the burden of tasks such as buying groceries, fetching water, cooking, etc. In this sense, investments in water and sanitation, electricity and energy infrastructure, such as clean cook-stoves are also essential. For urban women it is especially important to improve transportation systems (these are discussed in section 2.3).
- **Redistribution of unpaid care work**, so that the total unpaid care work to be done is more fairly distributed among households, communities, state and the private sector. In this sense, policies which enable parental (both maternal and paternal) leave are particularly important. Virtually every country in the world has some form of maternity protection legislation, but only 63 countries comply with the ILO Maternity Protection Convention (No. 183), which entitles women to no less of 14 weeks of paid leave to be paid for collectively (i.e., not only by employers) at a rate of at least two thirds of previous pay (UNW, 2015). In practice, only 28 per cent of employed women worldwide enjoy any paid maternity leave (ILO, 2014a). In 2013, provisions for paternity leave and parental leave were in place in 80 and 66 countries, respectively, but often with very limited entitlements (e.g. just two days leave) (UNW 2015).

Table 2: Potential interventions to reduce the burden of unpaid care work

Category	No change in roles or extent of care responsibilities	Overcome market and government failures affecting care responsibilities		Changes to institutional and power relations	
Approach	Adapt market system in light of a better understanding of care work	Reduce arduous and inefficient care tasks	Redistribute some responsibility from women to men or from household to state/market	Improve representation (bottom up)	Change norms and regulations
Examples	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Location of market/ produce collection points -Timing/ location of training, inputs or technical assistance -Technology, e.g. mobile banking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Labour saving equipment, e.g. grain grinding, laundry facilities, improved stoves -Village water source or electricity -Prepared foods (labour-saving products) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Redistribution of labour within the household -Provision of crèche or child-minder service -Elder care -Health services e.g. at work or community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Women's social capital e.g. support groups -Quotas for women in leadership -Increases in women's negotiating power in the household 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Influence social norms, e.g. through media, role models -Advocacy to change labour laws or standards re work hours or maternity

Source: Thorpe et al., 2016:17

3 Five women's urban livelihoods: enhancing empowerment through public policies

This section reviews the evidence on policy interventions which can enhance the empowering effects of the livelihoods in which women living in cities engage.

3.1 Wage workers in manufacturing

The entrance of women in the manufacturing sector has generated a different policy response in different countries (Razavi et al., 2004; UNRISD, 2010). While policy frameworks have evolved over time, wage employment does not guarantee access to social rights. Enhancing the empowering power of female wage employment in manufacturing requires interventions which span into different fields, including: reducing the burden of child and other care work, improving labour standards through voluntary regulation and national legislation, promoting workers collective action and voice, gender aware social protection (Barrientos et al., 2004; Kabeer, 2012). These issues are discussed in more detail below.

Labour standards and labour regulation: voluntary codes and national legislation

Many developing countries have ratified ILO's Conventions recognising labour standards, including standards related to gender equity in pay, access to employment, training and working conditions. However, they are not always enshrined in national law, or they are not enforced. One route that ILO and other institutions have followed to encourage the enforcement of standards is through trade agreements. For example, in Cambodia, improvements in the working conditions in the garment sector have been obtained thanks to the Better Work Program, first implemented in 2002 and then evolved into the Better Factories Cambodia program, managed by ILO and supported by the government and by unions. The program grew out of the Multi Fiber Agreement (1999-2004) which granted Cambodian garment exports preferential access to the U.S market. It aims at monitoring and improving working conditions in garment factories. Evidence suggests that improvements were realised in the areas and health and safety (Shea et al., 2010), and the garment and footwear sector is the only one in the country where a minimum wage is applied: introduced in 2011, set at \$80 per month, then increased to \$128 in 2015 (ILO, 2013). Remaining issues include involuntary overtime and lack of child care facilities (Shea et al., 2010). One limitation of this approach is that it may fail to reach the informal, sub-contracted, home-based workers which are located at the bottom end of the production network.

Private and corporate initiatives for the implementation of labour standards, such as voluntary codes of conduct, have proliferated since the 1990s, especially in garments, footwear and retailing, with mixed outcomes (Scott et al., 2013). Some evidence shows positive impacts in terms of worker health and safety, payment of minimum wages and reduction of unreasonable overtime but much weaker impacts on gender equality, wage discrimination and freedom of association (Kabeer, 2012; Newitt, 2013). Even when successful, the initiatives' outreach is usually limited to regular and permanent workers and misses casualised workforces, especially the many women working on temporary, casual, often home-based contracts (Mezzadri, 2014). In fact, subcontracting work to home-based workers is effectively a way for employers of transferring the costs and responsibilities of health and safety provisions to workers themselves (Mezzadri, 2014). Voluntary initiatives also have a record of focusing on more 'visible' issues such as health and safety conditions, neglecting more politically charged aspects such as wages, contractual arrangements and lack of access to social security (Barrientos et al., 2010;). So far, they have also demonstrated limited ability to ensure compliance and enforcement, and to impose meaningful sanctions or stipulate appropriate remedial action (OHCHR and CESR, 2013).

Minimum wage and collective bargaining

Minimum wages can play a key role in addressing low pay, reducing poverty as well as occupational inequality and narrowing gender pay gaps (UNW, 2015; ILO, 2010a), following increasing evidence that minimum wages, when well-designed and implemented, help protect workers and have limited impact either on employment, productivity growth or inflation (WB, 2012; Scott et al., 2013; ILO2010a, ILO 2013e). Importantly for this discussion, evidence suggests that minimum wages can narrow the gender pay gap: among OECD countries, the gender pay gap is 6 per cent in countries with a statutory minimum wage set at 40 per cent of median wages or above, 10 percentage points lower than the average gender pay gap for OECD countries (Rubery and Grimshaw, 2009). In Brazil, the doubling of the minimum wage in the 2000s has been associated with a narrowing of the gender pay gap (UNW, 2015).

By 2015, about 90 per cent of 151 countries and territories reviewed in a recent ILO study had some legislation or collective agreements that included provisions on minimum wages (ILO, 2015). However, in the majority of cases, these provisions do not apply uniformly at a national or regional basis, but are set by industry and occupation (ILO, 2016). Manufacturing is one of the sectors where minimum wage provisions are more often found (as in the case of Cambodia mentioned above), although with varying levels of compliance.

To be effective in addressing poverty and reducing gender inequalities in the labour market, minimum wages need to be extended to informal sector occupations, as some countries are already doing (Scott et al., 2012; UNW, 2015). Minimum wage in manufacturing sector can play an important role in the process by setting the example and setting a reference wage, or enforce a wage floor, with positive spillover effects on wages of uncovered sectors.

Gender aware social protection

In the informal sector, because of the absence of social protection, poor workers face high risks of damaging shocks which are likely to worsen their situations. The concentration of women in the informal sector means that they are more likely than men to be excluded from social protection systems, which contributes to gender gaps and disempowering of women. The lack of social protection for women means, among others, that they are not protected against unemployment, not able to take maternity leave without risking their jobs, forced to stay at home to care for children and elders in the household because of the lack of pensions and care services.

A few evaluations of interventions have shown that gender-responsive social protection programmes have significant impacts on women's livelihoods (Kabeer, 2013). These interventions can take the form of cash transfer programmes, public investments in infrastructure or provision of services.

In Egypt, the evaluation of a CCT programme launched in 2008 showed some positive effects on women's livelihoods. Poor families benefitted from financial support from the government if they met certain conditions such as school attendances, health centre visits and nutrition. The idea behind this initiative was that "women should be compensated for any time spent fulfilling the conditions, recognizing and rewarding their unpaid care work and that payment should be made through bank transfers so women could keep control of their own finances" (UN Women, 2015). The evaluation of the pilot showed, a decrease in domestic violence, a decrease in the number hours worked by women and an increase in the quality of employment (UN Women, 2015).

Another example of transfer is the case of the Productive Safety Net Programmes (PSNP), launched in 2005 in Ethiopia. The programme provides food and cash transfers to chronically food-insecure people. It also aims at creating public infrastructures and community assets such as roads and water sources, which has a positive impact on

women's livelihoods. For example, access to a road facilitates access to health care for women seeking for maternity care (UN Women, 2015). Public works are prioritised in order to reduce women's workload. Another aspect of the programme is the provision of community based childcare and a reduction of working time before and after childbirth for public work participants. This programme, which has been shown to be successful in rural areas has recently been extended to urban areas with an aim of reaching 4.7 million poor in 947 Ethiopian cities.

There are many other example of gender-responsive social protection programmes which have benefitted female workers. In South Africa, the Old Age Pension programme allowed elder female recipient to partly bear the costs of job search for their daughters, which encouraged them to migrate to urban areas to work. In Peru, road improvements increased women's mobility by 77%, safety in travel by 67% and income generation by 43%. In India, the Midday Meal Scheme allowed to lighten working mother's schedule by providing a meal to their children at school (UN Women, 2015).

One tricky aspect of social protection expansion is that ensuring basic rights and protection to working women may affect negatively their attractiveness to employers and therefore result in a decrease in employment rate and wage. This is why the social protection 'burden' must mainly be borne by the state as opposed to the employer. Finding public resources is one of the main concerns when expanding a social protection programme. Ecuador, Lesotho and Thailand took advantage of debt restructuring to free some resources, while Bolivia and Botswana used revenues from natural resources to finance their programmes.

3.2 Women Entrepreneurs

Women entrepreneurs in developing countries face a number of constraints which prevent their business activities from being drivers of economic empowerment. This is true for both poor and non-poor, rural and urban women. This section illustrates the evidence of interventions which are needed to promote the businesses of poor and near-poor urban women. These include: Investment in education, vocational training, the introduction of short-term, out-of-school entrepreneurial courses for female adults, and the inclusion of entrepreneurial subjects in secondary schools and as courses at tertiary level.

Young women can benefit from the strengthening of vocational training systems: evidence shows that vocational training has had a small positive effect on employment, formal employment and monthly earnings in low- and lower-middle-income countries (Tripney et al., 2013). However, vocational training often suffers from gender segregation, even in cities: for example, among 100 urban and peri-urban enterprises providing informal apprenticeship in Malawi, the only trade that reported considerable numbers of females was Hair Dressing / Salon (Aggarwal et al., 2010). However, programmes can be designed to overcome gender discrimination. For example, The Informal Sector Training and Resources Network (ISTARN) project in Zimbabwe managed to attract more than 30 per cent participants in its training activities by selecting a trade where gender stereotypes did not yet exist that is solar electric installation (Grunwald, Nell and Shapiro, 2005; GTZ, 2000, in ILO, 2012b).

Business training tailored to women and their needs.

Overall, evidence suggests that business training helps men and women starting up firms and improves their productivity and profitability (see the literature reviewed in Mariotti and Shepherd, 2015). However, effectiveness of training seems to differ by gender, and

training programmes targeting women only seem to deliver stronger results, although the size of the business also seems to influence the ability to benefit from the training.

For example, in Uganda, the International Labour Organization (ILO) Start-and-Improve Your Business (SIYB) programme was implemented in collaboration with the MFI PRIDE and delivered four different types of interventions to groups of men and women: loans, loans combined with training, grants and grants combined with training. Recipients were micro-entrepreneurs, mainly tailors or running hair salons and retail shops. No effect for women was found from any of the interventions. On the contrary, six and nine months after the interventions, men with access to loans with training reported 54% greater profits and this seemed to increase slightly over time (Fiala, 2014).

A business training programme in Lima, Peru, provided personal development, business management and productive skills to 1,416 female micro-entrepreneurs who had previously benefited through the titling of their urban parcel. Half of the selected women were also offered technical assistance. After four months, the trained women had made some adjustments in their business practices, although those who had also received technical assistance were more prone to plan and execute innovations, as well as to increase their association with business peers and use informal credit sources. Furthermore, such innovations led to an increase in sales of at least 18%. Women with relatively larger businesses were better able to catch the benefits in terms of business income and practices (Valdivia, 2011).

In Liberia, the Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young women (EPAG) skill training programme, launched in 2008 has shown positive impact on women's self-employment. The Business Development Services (BDS) branch of the programme aimed at teaching how to identify micro-enterprise opportunities and how to manage and expand an existing business. This programme, which was implemented in urban areas around Monrovia, was evaluated with a randomised control trial and showed that the women who received the BDS training were more likely to open their own business than in the control group and in the group who received the standard wage employment training. The EPAG was more successful in encouraging self-employment than wage employment (which increased by 20%), due to the structure of the urban labour market in Liberia (Adoho et al., 2014)

Easier business registration and taxation for women entrepreneurs.

Regulations and taxation systems are rather gender-neutral when it comes to creating and running a business. The disadvantages faced by women (lack of education, lack of mobility, less access to credit, etc.) are rooted in daily traditional behaviours which result in more difficulties for women to open their own business, creating a gender bias. Less complex and pro-women taxation and regulation systems would therefore be a way to overcome this bias and reduce the gender gap. In Ghana, the implementation of the World Bank's Doing Business style reforms aimed at making it easier, cheaper and quicker to start businesses for women. This took the form of one-stop-shop and hotline services, the computerisation of business registration and the creation of brochures that explain legal procedures in simple terms (Hampel-Milagrosa, 2013).

Governments can stimulate women's entrepreneurial activity by introducing affirmative policies, into public procurement (ITC, 2014).

This approach could contribute to encourage women-owned businesses to enter traditionally male-dominated sectors (e.g. construction or car repair) which are generally

more profitable (Carlos, et al., 2015). Women-owned businesses face many challenges in engaging in public procurement, including lack of information about tender opportunities, overly complex procedures, unreasonable technical and financial qualification requirements, large contract sizes, insufficient time to assemble tenders, and delayed payment.

Governments can improve access to information and opportunities setting up web portals to publish all public solicitations or tenders. For example, the Indian Government Tenders Information System, an interactive database for central and state governments and other public bodies, allows users to search and sort tenders by location, agency, description and value, and to download documentation. Trade support institutions and women's business associations can build capacity to help women entrepreneurs compete in public procurement markets and bids and adequately provide goods and services. In South Africa, the National Small Business Chamber is encouraging large business and government to subscribe to the Prompt Payment Code, to encourage prompt payment at prime and subcontract levels (ITC, 2014).

Tailoring financial products and services to the characteristics of women-led enterprises, including informal and microbusiness activities.

These activities usually generate small and short-term financial flows that are essential to the everyday subsistence of the family but are not perceived as contributing to the household's finances. This leads to a substantial underestimation of a household's income and borrowing capacity. For example, women in Philippines' urban slums are more constrained than men because informal lenders rely more on reputation and credit history to screen prospective borrowers than their wealth, while the consequences of repayment delays or defaults are much more severe for women (Malapit, 2012). Urban poor female entrepreneurs may be better served by microcredit programmes which target explicitly women. For example, in 2005, Spandana started providing microcredit to poor women in the slums of Hyderabad, India. 15-18 months after the start of activities, average borrowing had increased by 8.3 percentage points in the areas served. Households were also 1.7 percentage points more likely to have started a new business, although no impact was found on per capita expenditure (Banerjee et al., 2014).

Cash grants to help support small businesses.

The evidence on the impact of this type of grants is mixed and seem to differ between men and women. However, observed differences may not owe to gender itself but to business characteristics associated with it, such as the size of the firm. In Sri Lanka, a field experiment provided unconditional cash grants in cash or in kind to a sample of urban small enterprises with capital stock of less than \$1,000. On average, the grants increased monthly profits of the business by 5.5% of the grant size in the first year and by 4.9% in the second year following the grant disbursement. Significant difference was observed in the returns by gender of the business owner: male-owned businesses realised a return of 9% in their monthly profit, while female-owned enterprises realised no increase in profits. Even five years after the grant disbursement, male-owned enterprises were realising a profit and female-owned were not (De Mel et al., 2008, 2012). In Ghana, an experiment provided unconditional cash and in-kind grants to male- and female-owned microenterprises in urban areas. For female-owned businesses only the in-kind grant had a positive impact on profit, and only for the top 40% of businesses in terms of initial size. Male-owned enterprises benefited from both types, with no differences associated with size (Fafchamps et al., 2011).

3.3 Home-based workers

Home-based work refers to two broad categories: self-employed workers and sub-contracted workers (often paid on piece-rate basis). It is one of the main occupations for women living in developing countries' cities, because it is more compatible with care work

duties and gender norms which require them to stay at home. It is especially prevalent in South Asia, where home based workers account for 60 to 90 percent of employment in key export industries (Sinha, 2013a). In India, in 2009-10 home-based workers represented 18 percent of total urban employment and 23 percent of urban informal employment, and the majority are women (Chen and Raveendran, 2011).

For home-based workers, home is also their workplace, so that poor living conditions imply poor health and safety conditions at work, such as crowded environments, lack of running water, limited natural light and fresh air. Because they are mostly invisible and unorganised, they are neglected and unrecognised by policies and urban planning, so they also often lack access to credit, social insurance or other government schemes (Sinha, 2013a).

Empowering home-based working women requires interventions which improve their physical environment and interventions which give visibility and recognition to their role as workers. SEWA (the Self-Employed Women's Association of India, which operates in both rural and urban areas) is one of the few organisations around the world which has successfully implemented a number of these interventions, including (Sinha, 2013b):

- The organisation and connection of workers to overcome their isolation and give them voice and confidence;
- The implementation of studies to better understand their roles and needs and advocate for their inclusion into statistics and policies. As a result, India is one of the few countries where home-based workers are included as a category in the national level data collection;
- The fight for labour rights and inclusive collective bargaining, achieving the inclusion of home-based workers into a number of labour laws – for example the establishment of a minimum wage for *agarbatti* (incense sticks) rollers;
- The provision of loans and programmes in support with local organisations for housing improvements, slum upgradation and electricity connection;
- Training and health education about appropriate posture, adequate lighting, appropriate tools and safe equipment to improve workers' occupational health and safety;
- Helping women to develop businesses and build skills through enterprise loans for buying trade equipment, access to low cost material and training.

Another area of intervention which can improve the conditions of home based workers is land regulation enabling mixed-use zoning. Traditional zoning systems tend to distinguish residential, commercial, manufacturing and institutional use of space. This approach harms home-based workers (who may be performing commercial or productive activities in residential areas) by adding an element of 'illegality' to their activities (Sinha, 2013a). Urban planning and regulation policies should promote a balanced mix of uses – acknowledging an already de facto existing situation – allowing and regulating home based production and small scale commercial activities in residential areas (Nohn, 2011).

3.4 Street vendors

Street trade is one of the most important urban livelihoods across Latin America, Africa and Asia. The presence of women in the sector varies: it is mostly a female occupation in many cities of Latin America, West Africa and South East Asia, while women street vendors are less present in predominantly Muslim countries and in South Asia.

As an informal activity, street trade tends to be neglected by national policies and urban planning. However, street trade is more visible than other informal occupations and for

this reason it is often object of harassment and risk of eviction, especially when it is perceived to create an obstacle to processes of requalification and attraction of international investments. These processes create unsafe environments for the women selling on the streets, who can be harassed and forced to move at any time, and must pay large fines if they are caught by the police. Vendors are often moved out of their traditional markets, which are then replaced with modern shopping centres and supermarkets. This tendency undermines the livelihoods of both traditional sellers and consumers. Poor and near poor consumers are negatively affected because they are deprived of their local markets providing fresh food at affordable prices. Working women are especially affected because providing food for the family becomes more expensive and time-consuming.

In Hanoi, for example, selling on the street was officially banned in 2008 as part of the city's modernisation policy. Almost 200 small and informal markets were closed between 2010 and 2013, and ten larger traditional markets were demolished and turned into commercial centres between 2005 and 2014 (Daniel et al., 2015). Even when redevelopment policies include space for vendors in the new modern buildings, these are usually inadequate to the needs of vendors and customers of the traditional fresh markets. Women who used to earn a living in traditional markets cannot count on finding employment in the new shopping centres, where there may be a lower number of jobs available.

Public policies in support of street vendors have been sporadic, more frequent have been bottom-up initiatives initiated by street traders themselves, often in collaboration with national and international NGOs. Some important lessons on interventions which work include:

Urban spatial planning which takes into account the logistical needs and characteristics of street vendors is critical. Key issues include location of the market place with respect to transport nodes and areas of transit for consumers, the creation of tailor-made facilities such as shelters, places to store goods and ablution facilities. For example, following the introduction of the 1992 Sustainable Dar es Salaam Project (SDP), 24 types of steel shelves for street traders to display their goods were developed. This was a design solution that addressed health concerns of authorities, particularly with food traders, but also facilitated the cleaning of public space (Skinner, 2008). In Bhubaneswar, India, the regularisation of street vending has gone through a collaboration between the town authorities and the street vendors for the creation of 52 dedicated vending zones and the construction of approximately 2,600 aesthetically pleasing fixed kiosks (Kumar, 2012).

Evidence suggests that more inclusive urban plans are more frequent in contexts where traders are comparatively well organized. For example, since the 1990s Dar es Salaam has created a relatively enabling environment for small traders, partly thanks to the work of the Association of Small Scale Businesses, which acts as a lobbyist and pressure group and is involved in the selection of public space for business activities (Nnkya, 2006). In Bhubaneswar, a situation of repeated clashes between the local administration and street vendors was resolved thanks to the intervention of the National Association of Street Vendors of India which promoted a platform for discussion between the municipal corporation and the street vendors' organisations to come up with a solution (Kumar, 2012).

Advocating the needs of street traders works best with multi-faceted advocacy campaign which involve a wide range of stakeholders. In Hanoi, traditional markets where thousands of poor urban women operates were saved by a multi-faceted advocacy campaign implemented by the Canadian NGO HealthBridge in collaboration with local women's groups (Daniel et al., 2015). The campaign convinced the government to stop

three projects to replace markets and to reconsider the rebuilding of eight markets that were to be combined with shopping malls. Subsequently, the government announced that it had decided to stop replacing markets with commercial centres (Daniel et al., 2015). The campaign involved research to understand the specific nature of the problems, the creation of networks including partnering with previous allies, work with local media and empowering local women's groups to articulate the importance of the traditional markets to their way of life.

Recognition in national policy frameworks and inclusion in urban planning can turn street trade from marginal livelihood to empowering economic activity.

Bangkok, in Thailand, provides a particularly successful model of accommodation of street vendors in the city's economic, cultural and spatial landscape. In 2010, there were 664 designated areas for street vending, which were occupied by approximately 20,000 vendors, as well as 19,000 listed street vendors operating without permission in another 750 vending locations (Yasmeen and Nirathron, 2014). At least half of all street vendors are women. Street vending in Bangkok is not necessarily a marginal livelihoods: many vendors belong to the middle class, while others are migrants from neighbouring countries. Since the early 2000s, the importance of petty trade – including street trade – has been acknowledged in national planning and a number of policies have been passed to create an enabling environment for self-employment. The three most important provisions were: the establishment of the People's Bank Project to provide credit to small enterprises; the introduction of the Universal Coverage System in 2002, thanks to which street vendors became entitled to universal health coverage; the introduction of "assets-capitalization" measure, by which street vendors could use permits for use of public spaces as collateral to take loans from government banks. At the same time, street vendors were asked to pay cleaning fees, guidelines (concerning dress code, personal hygiene, and care for cooking utensils) were introduced for food vendors and campaigns to promote street 'orderliness' were run (Yasmeen and Nirathron, 2014). While street trade in Bangkok is not without its problems, this multi-pronged policy strategy has prevented it from becoming a marginal livelihood and has in fact made it possible for street vendors to embark in trajectories of economic empowerment.

In 2004, the Indian government adopted a National Policy on Urban Street Vendors which aims at providing and promoting a supportive environment, while at the same time reducing congestion and maintaining sanitary conditions in public spaces and streets (Sinha and Roever, 2011). The innovative element of the policy is that it recognises the contribution of street vendors to urban life, and it takes a supportive approach with a view to urban poverty alleviation. Two critical objectives are establishing legal status for vendors, including vending zones in urban planning, and ensuring a transparent regulation system to address the persistent problems of police harassment and political patronage. The policy also supports the creation of organizations of street vendors, and their participation in urban planning through Town Vending Committees (Sinha and Roever, 2011).

Especially important for women are interventions which aim at building their organisational capacity, their leadership and decision-making power within street trader organisation.

In fact, although women constitute the majority of street traders as well as the majority of the of street trader organisation members, the leaders are often men. This was observed, for example, in Malawi, Zambia, Mozambique (War on Want 2006) and in South Africa (Lund and Skinner 1999), as well as in Lima, Peru' (Roever and Linares, 2010). Interestingly, women seem to play a much more dominant role in leadership positions in markets in matrilineal societies of West Africa (Skinner, 2008). This type of initiatives have so far come almost exclusively from grassroots organisations. For example, the Women's Network of Street and Market Vendors of Lima, Peru (Red de

Mujeres Trabajadores Ambulantes y Comerciantes de Mercados) aims to organize women working as street vendors into small-scale networks and enhance their presence inside their own organisations and in the public sphere, so that they are seen as viable leadership candidates. Key activities to achieve this include empowerment workshops to build women's self-esteem, recognition of their rights as workers and see themselves as a micro-entrepreneur. The Network also provides training in the leadership skills necessary to run an organisation (Roever and Linares, 2010).

3.5 Paid domestic workers

Women constitute the majority of paid domestic workers across the world: in 2010 there were 53 million domestic workers worldwide, and on average women represented 73% of the total in developing countries for which data are available (UN, 2015), and 83% globally (ILO, 2013a). According to the ILO, there are also nearly 12 million girls aged 5–17 in paid domestic work (ILO 2013b,c). Domestic workers in cities are often migrants from rural areas or from other countries, typically girls and young women who have dropped out of school in search of a source of income. For example, migrant domestic workers make up between one quarter and one third of an estimated 22 million migrant workers in the Middle East and North Africa (Al-Nashif, N. 2012.)

While paid domestic work is an important and expanding source of wage employment for women, it is also often informal and of poor quality. Domestic workers tend to be seen as an extension of the family rather than employees - both from their direct employers and from national policies. About 30 per cent of domestic workers worldwide are currently excluded from national labour legislation and don't have access to social security schemes, 43 per cent are not covered by minimum wage legislation and 36 per cent are not entitled to maternity protection (ILO, 2013a).

Migrant domestic workers are especially vulnerable: they are usually uncovered by law in both sending and receiving countries, often depend on recruitment agencies and lack information on migration procedures. Cases have been reported of employers confiscating the workers' identity papers (Tomei and Belser, 2011). In cases of abuse, they lack access to effective redress mechanisms.

What makes paid domestic work particularly significant with respect to women economic empowerment in the context of urbanisation is that the entrance of many women in the workforce, and their ability to take on progressively remunerative and better job was often made possible exactly thanks to the presence in cities of an ever growing number of girls and young women available to replace them in carrying out family care for a (small) wage.

Improving domestic workers' status, wages and working conditions can be achieved through: recognition of the work they do, formalisation, especially through contracts, minimum wages legislation and organisation, though the latter includes civil society action as well as unionisation (Scott et al, 2013).

Recognition of domestic work as a profession, formalisation and extension of labour rights to domestic workers

Important advancements have been achieved at the global and national level in the formal recognition of domestic work and its inclusion in minimum wage legislation, social insurance schemes and other labour laws.

In 2011, ILO adopted the Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189), which requires States to extend basic labour rights to domestic workers, such as normal hours of work with regular periods of rest, overtime compensation, annual paid leave, minimum wages, a safe and healthy working environment and social security benefits. To date, 17 countries have ratified the convention (UN Women 2015), although its implementation is still patchy.

In South Africa since 2003, employers are required to register domestic workers and make social security contributions for them. By 2008, over 633,000 domestic workers had been registered with the Unemployed Insurance Fund (ILO, 2013d). Compliance is enforced through regular inspections as well as sanctions. In the event of a dispute, domestic workers can access the Commission for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (ILO, 2013d)

Formalisation of domestic work is a delicate process which can encounter resistance from employers and have downsides for employees, especially in the short term. For example, in Ecuador informal employment declined between 2009 and 2012 from 60.9 per cent to 50.1 per cent, thanks to various government initiatives which included institutional reforms to strengthen work rights and employers' duties, policies to improve social security coverage and reactivation of work inspectorates (ILO/OIT, 2014). The decrease in the share of informal workers was observed in particular in the domestic work sector, however this was also accompanied by a decrease in the total number of workers. This suggests that some workers may have lost their jobs because the families employing them were not able to meet the requirement associated with formalisation (i.e. minimum wage and the expenses associated with enrolment in social security). Avoiding that informal workers are negatively affected by formalisation effort requires a step-by-step approach (Chen 2011), with measures to support employers in the transition and to broaden the range of employment opportunities available to workers.

Achieving progressive legislation in this field may prove even more difficult than for other categories of informal employment, because the civil society activists, trade unionists and legislators who might advocate and fight for the rights of domestic workers could themselves employ domestic workers. This can lead to reticence to legislate on the issue (CPAN, 2012). For instance, in India legislation proposed by the National Commission for Women and civil society groups in 2008 on regulation of placement agencies for domestic workers has received resistance from middle class constituencies (Palriwala, and Neethalanda 2010). In some Latin American countries, the legislative process on the issue is stagnating in parliaments for similar reasons (UN Women, 2015).

Minimum wages

As for other categories of informal employment, evidence suggests that setting a minimum wage for domestic work can have significant results in terms of ensuring an adequate standard of living for domestic workers. In South Africa, minimum wage for domestic workers was established in 2002, together with an 8 per cent wage increase for that year (UN Women, 2015). As a result, 16 months later, the average wage of domestic workers had increased by 20% ((UN Women, 2015). Several countries are extending national minimum wages to domestic workers: recently, Chile, Portugal and Trinidad and Tobago (ILO, 2013a). In India, a number of states have included domestic workers in legislative provisions (CPAN, 2012). In 2010, the state of Andhra Pradesh implemented an awareness campaign to motivate employers to pay the minimum wage established in 2007, as many were not aware of its existence (Nimushakavi 2011).

Organising domestic workers

Domestic workers are a very isolated, invisible and vulnerable category of employment. Collective organisation is essential for their voice to be heard. Trade unions and grassroots organisation play a key role in this sense. A successful example is that of the South African Domestic Service and Allied Workers Union, SADSAWU, which convinced the government to include domestic workers into unemployment insurance schemes (CPAN, 2012). Critical to this success were the creation of alliances with NGOs, the Commission on Gender Equality and the Congress of South African Trade Unions. They pursued the case through public hearings where they demonstrated the unconstitutional and discriminatory exclusion of domestic workers. Reference to international laws, especially the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women was important to winning the case.

The lesson of this experience is that progress can be made when domestic workers are in alliance with elements of the state as well as a powerful, general trade unions (Fish 2006).

An increasingly important role in organising domestic workers is being played by placement agencies. They can offer significant support to workers when well run and regulated, but also reinforce informality and vulnerability when they don't (CPAN, 2012). In China, there are 20 million domestic workers, 90% of whom are female. They are more likely to use formal recruitment services than workers in other sectors (ILO, n.a). These services often include training, and are available from labour bureaus, and the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF). ACWF runs 465 domestic service agencies and cooperates with labour bureaus to provide vocational training and issue certificates to trained domestic workers (ILO, n.a). Some domestic service agencies follow a 'labour dispatch model' by which the agencies recruit domestic workers as their staff and train them before dispatching them to serve in households. Payments from the household go to the agency and the agency pays wages to the workers, and is responsible for paying social security insurance (ILO, n.a). This model is also adopted in some government-organised labour exporting projects which function as intermediaries between sending and receiving areas. One risk of this model is that it replaces informal networks which also typically provide support to workers when they face difficulties (Guo et al. 2011), something that the agency are not likely to provide.

4 Two cross-cutting areas of intervention

Women in cities face disadvantages and persistent inequalities in a number of areas, which undermine their economic empowerment. These include physical and financial assets (including land, housing and urban services), access to human capital, personal safety and security, health, space mobility and connectivity, representation in formal structures of urban governance and time availability (Chant, 2013; Tacoli and Satterthwaite, 2013; Brouder and Sweetman, 2015). Two cross-cutting areas are especially important to facilitate women's engagement in paid work and at the same time reduce the burden of unpaid care work: access to infrastructure such as urban transport and childcare.

4.1 Urban infrastructure and use of public space

The importance of urban infrastructure for women's economic empowerment

Within poor urban populations, both men and women have a restricted access to infrastructures such as public transport, sewer systems, drainage, water, electricity and sanitation facilities. However, this lack of infrastructure has different consequences on men and women. Indeed, urban slums characterised by infrastructure deficiencies add to the women's dual burden of productive and reproductive labour (Chant, 2013).

The lack of water supply in the household constrains women to collect them from public pipes, which often requires a long walk. This has negative effects on women's health as they have to carry heavy vessels over a significant distance and sometimes stand in a queue for a long time (Chant, 2015). The rapid expansion of urban areas due to rural-urban migration has resulted in an increase in the size of slums and unplanned settlements was not accompanied by an expansion of infrastructure availability (Fontana and Natali, 2008). As a result, 'people are on average spending more time fetching water than they did in the 1990s' (Arvidson and Nordstrom, 2006), and this task is more likely to be completed by women than men. In urban areas, the distance to the closest water pipe might be smaller than in rural areas (see Fontana and Natali, 2008 for a case study on Tanzania) but the levels of insecurity and the risk of assault against women is higher in the cities (Tacoli, 2013).

Moreover, poor household also have restricted access to electricity in the household. As a result, women often need to spend time buying fuel, making fire to cook and shopping on a daily basis due to the impossibility to keep products refrigerated. In urban slums, households are less likely to produce their own subsistence goods are more likely to have a restricted stocking capacity, meaning that the woman in the household is constrained to leave the house more often than in rural areas. All the time spent completing these tasks adds to women's domestic workload and constitutes an opportunity cost of not engaging in an income generating activity (Chant, 2013).

Further difficulties and disempowering factors arise when women have limited access to sanitary facilities. Some household in urban Tanzania, for example, are constrained to share a single pit latrine with several households. This causes discomfort and health risks, especially for women experiencing menstruation and pregnancy. Using public toilets also increases the risk for women of being assaulted and abused en route or at destination. (Chant, 2013).

The lack of access to basic infrastructure has therefore a more negative impact on women than on men and contributes to women's disempowerment through a negative effect on their health, their daily schedule and their safety.

The remaining of this subsection focuses on the case of transport, which is a typical urban infrastructure which affects women's empowerment

The case of urban transport

Transport is a gender issue: women and men have different travel and transport needs due to their different social and economic roles and activities. Women also face different constraints than men in accessing, using and paying for transport services (WB, 2010). Women are generally more likely to use public transport or walk and their mobility is related to the variety of activities that they perform during the day, including shopping, school trips and reaching the work place (Tacoli and Satterthwaite, 2013). Many urban women - especially poor women, tend to travel longer or use more inconvenient and physically exhausting modes of transport than men (World Bank, 2010). However, urban transport planning rarely accounts for these differences and for the specific needs of women, often seriously constraining their mobility.

Gender-blind transport planning generally assumes male labour patterns, prioritising travel from peri-urban areas to city centres during peak hours, neglecting that women tend to perform multi-purpose, multi-stop trips at different times during the day and in non-centralised/peripheral zones (WB, 2010; Chant, 2013; UN-HABITAT 2013). The increasing cost of public and private transport often associated with urban growth, risk of physical violence and sexual harassment, and the inefficiencies of the transport system which add to women time burdens and time poverty are additional problems. Limited and inefficient mobility can undermine women's ability of catching the benefits and the empowering effects of urban life, for example reducing their access to health, education and training services, their ability to participate in urban life and to create social connections, and their workforce participation (Chant, 2013).

Female-friendly urban transportation systems can be achieved through a combination of physical and institutional interventions:

Women only transportation: One way of making transport safer is to provide women-only subways, buses and/or train carriages. Such initiatives have been introduced in a number of cities including Mexico City, Cairo, Jakarta, Japan, New Delhi, Manila, Rio de Janeiro and Moscow. There have also been women-only taxis in the UK, Mexico, Russia, India, Dubai and Iran. (WB, 2010, UN-HABITAT, 2013) These initiatives can provide an immediate solution to harassment and danger experienced by women, but they are not a definitive solution to the problem because they are not able by themselves to transform gender relations and could even be seen as a throwback in the fight for women's equal access to public transportation (WB, 2010). However, the case of Mexico city shows that women-only transformation can provide broader, transformative results if accompanied by a range of initiatives aimed at tackling gender discrimination, such as wider changes to laws, provision of support for victims of violence, and positive images of women which help women act collectively against violence (Dunckel-Graglia, 2013). Women-only subway carriages and buses were introduced in Mexico City in 2000, but they had limited effects on the widespread gender-based violence affecting women on public transport. In May 2007, the 'Women's Access to a Life Free of Violence Law' was passed, which forced policymakers to think about the protection of women commuters who tried to report or confront their attackers while using public transportation. In 2009, a new strategy was implemented, aimed at tackling both the legal and cultural roots of gender discrimination and violence. First, the programme *Viajemos Seguras* (We Women Travel Safe) encompassed the establishment of booths and hotlines throughout subway stations and bus terminals to give women a safe and secure place to report crimes. Second, women-only transportation was turned into 'pink transportation', introducing a visual campaign on buses that depicted women as independent public figures who are not confined to the private sphere of the family and home. A line of taxis driven by women, only stopping for women was also introduced. While women in Mexico City still cannot claim that these public spaces are open and available for them to use without fear, this strategy has helped to create spaces where women can confront their attackers, to stimulate public debates about gender equality and violence against women and to change cultural views about

women and their role in the society, making it acceptable to shift the blame of harassment and violence from women to men (Dunckel-Graglia, 2013).

Women friendly pricing system: One other possible way to adapt urban transports to women's needs can be to set a pricing system for public transport which is affordable and which encompasses multi-stops tickets which suit the chain-trips performed by women.

Urban transport projects: This type of projects seek to improve the status of pedestrians, bikes and public transport passengers, focusing on measures especially important for women including:

- Improving pedestrian environments by building exclusive sidewalks as components of road and public transport improvement projects
- Supporting intermediate modes of transport (IMTs) such as rickshaws, bicycles and motorcycles, which can provide women with more flexible routes, schedules and lower fares. IMTs are usually provided by informal operators, and complement the public transport system where coverage is lacking. They can offer low-cost solutions for short distances, particularly in congested urban areas, and can often accommodate the transportation of small loads, which urban women often have to carry (WB, 2010; CDIA, 2011). Research in three middle-size Indonesia cities shows that local governments can support informal public transportation providers through the creation of "transportation facilitators" such as: wooden signs indicating where to board, negotiated agreements between driver cooperatives and local businesses to provide service to customers, curbs to designate vehicle parking areas, and helmets provided to passengers (CDIA, 2011).
- Restructuring public transport fleet and facilities so that off-peak hour and multi-chain trips are possible for women. Targeted local responses that provide non-commuter or decentralized services to help women access specific destinations such as markets, educational and employment facilities, administration offices and services should be supported. Especially important for women is the improvement and rehabilitation of access routes to terminals, focusing on accessibility by pedestrians and bicycles as well as improving the quality of facilities and include for example separate, well-lighted female bathrooms (WB, 2010).
- Creating interurban services which cover peripheral low-income areas and link them tend to the main transport routes and places of employment. The interventions implemented in Bogota', Colombia during the administration of Enrique Peñalosa's (1998-2001), represent a good example of an integrated and inclusive approach to transportation. These interventions included radical reforms in transport, infrastructure and use of urban space: prioritising walkway and bicycle lane projects over cars to maximise popular mobility, promoted the Bogotá's 'Sunday Ciclovía' tradition, a weekly car-free event, and implemented the TransMilenio bus rapid transit system, which serves Bogotá's slum. This sort of inclusive approach is good for women because it is a good strategy to address inequalities that comes with a stratified and fragmented transport system which favours richer car drivers over mass poorer mass transit users. For example, the TransMilenio bus rapid transit system provides universal access to all stations and buses in trunk lines which cater to the needs of women, the disabled and the elderly (UN-HABITAT 2013; Castro and Echeverri, 2011).

Including women in participatory consultations to improve the planning and design of projects: The Liaoning urban transport project in China relied on participatory methods in the design and feasibility phase, the implementation and the appraisal phases of the project. Separate consultations with men and women provided information on the

most used forms of transport and for which purposes, as well as the major transport issues faced by users. The dissatisfaction of women with the current transport system emerged strongly. The findings of the consultation led to changes in the initial project design towards improvement of secondary roads, traffic management, sidewalks and crossings, public transport services and street lights (WB, 2010).

4.2 Childcare services

Lack of childcare is a major barrier to decent work for poor and non-poor women, and is in fact cited as the main reason for women being unable to undertake paid work outside the home (Oxfam, 2011). More generally, it constrains women occupational mobility. In cities, this situation is aggravated by the reduced support from extended family members (whom are often also working) and the greater logistical difficulties in traveling to and from the workplace.

Almost half of the world's countries have no formal programmes for children under 3, and for those that do have programmes, coverage is limited (UNESCO, 2007). Pre-school programmes (for children older than 3) exist and are expanding in most developing countries, but remain uneven in coverage and often don't meet the needs of working parents in terms of the hours and duration of programmes. This is sometimes also a problem for school-aged children in primary or secondary school (Cassirer and Addati, 2007).

Hiring domestic workers is a common solution for many families trying to cope with the lack of childcare, but it is only available to relatively better off families. Poor families resort to other solutions, such as leaving children with their older siblings or taking children to work with them. Bringing children to work is a short term solution with its own downsides. For example, it diminishes the time and investments that women can put into paid work, while it can expose children to unhealthy and unsafe conditions (Cassirer and Addati, 2007).

Solutions which are feasible for both poor and non-poor working women include community-based care options, work-based nurseries and care homes, state parental or carer support transfers, and dedicated private and/or public facilities. (UN-Habitat, 2013). Although still rare, examples of successful childcare initiatives from around the world designed to address the specific needs of informal economy workers exist. For example, the programme 'Hogares Comunitarios' (Community Households) established in Latin American countries such as Costa Rica and Colombia provides subsidised childcare in poor neighbourhoods via the training of local women as 'community mothers' (UN-Habitat, 2013). SEWA provides social security services (including health, housing, credit and childcare) to its members through seven dedicated organisations in exchange of a nominal fee. The Sangini childcare cooperative has 825 members and reaches 3,639 members' children; the Shaishav childcare cooperative has 92 members and reaching 1,500 members' children (De Luca et al., 2013). A study of the ILO's Conditions of Work and Employment Programme (Cassirer and Addati, 2007) collected a number of these examples from Africa (Kenya and Mozambique), Asia (India and Thailand) and Latin America (Chile, Costa Rica, Guatemala). Important findings from these studies are the following:

- Successful initiatives were implemented by a variety of actors, including national (Chile) and local governments (Guatemala and Mozambique), trade unions and workers (Costa Rica and India), employers (Kenya) and NGOs (Thailand). Beneficiaries included parents engaged in a variety of occupations, for example street sellers, waste recyclers and domestic workers. The initiatives provided care during the parents' working hours, often including meals and health services, and children from a very young age were accepted.

How can public policy enhance female employment and empower women economically as countries urbanize?

- These initiatives had enabled parents (especially mothers) to work more productively and with less interruptions, in some cases resulting in higher earnings. Provision of food and health care helped relieve households' budget and reduced children's exposure to chronic disease and malnutrition.
- Designing childcare services in consultation with parents is fundamental for their success, for example in determining their location. In some cases, workers preferred having childcare near the worksite, in others they preferred not to subject their children to long commutes, traffic and pollution. Ensuring that caregivers enjoy decent working conditions also emerged as an important factor.
- A major issue for these initiatives is their financial sustainability. In some cases the service was entirely offered for free, in others it partly relied on parents' contributions, but even in these cases it wasn't self-sufficient. In some cases, the long term viability of the service rested on multi-sectoral partnerships.

5 Concluding remarks and policy recommendations

Policy interventions at different stages of urbanization and political and economic contexts

The evidence collected for this paper does not offer many obvious insights on how the various policy interventions discussed have performed in countries at different stages of urbanisation, or under different economic and political conditions (see also below). However, on the grounds of this evidence, it is possible to draw some considerations on the role of policies for women economic empowerment under evolving urbanisation scenarios.

First, many transformations in the economic, social and political lives of women associated with urbanisation have not been the result of single policies but of broader processes of change. For example, the enhanced presence of women in the workforce and in politics has resulted in many cases from conflicts and economic and political crisis which have broken the traditional (gendered) organisation of the society. Another important driver of change has been economic structural transformation and the associated changes in the labour market, with wage employment opportunities being created for poor, unskilled women.

Often, these non-policy drivers have been stronger than the cultural resistance to the associated changes. For example, migration of workers from rural to urban areas is generally not supported by the middle class and by elites. Yet this has happened where (foreign and domestic) investments needed cheap workforce to employ in manufacturing.

The implication is that these processes – and in particular the increased participation of urban women in the workforce - have occurred in absence of a supporting policy framework. This has not constrained women economic empowerment at the beginning, but as economic transformation and urbanisation advance, lack of adequate policies can imply a slowdown of progressive change and the predominance of disempowering effects. Policies are needed to sustain progressive change over time and their importance increases as urbanisation advances and triggers processes of exclusion and inclusion. Women are especially vulnerable to these processes and need support to catch the benefits and escape the negative impacts.

The policies and interventions which are needed to support women's urban livelihoods change as cities undergo transformations such as growth of a middle-class and the arrival of national and international migrant. For example, increase in consumers' demand opens up opportunities for upgrade and expansion for street traders. However, this can only happen if they are given access to financial services, skill training and social protection (as seen in the case of Bangkok). An important connected issue is that the relevance of informal urban livelihoods – such as street trading – does not diminish with countries' transition from LICs to MICs.

Among the variety of livelihoods women undertake, many are subject to exclusion and inclusion processes. These processes undermine the empowerment trajectories women can or have to potential to experience. The inclusion and exclusion processes in question do not exclusively depend on policies related to urban planning and urban living conditions, but also on macroeconomic policies which determine the level and composition of public expenditure, the exchange rate, trade liberalisation, inflation and foreign investment inflow. These policies have gender-biased effects and affect women more than men (UN Habitat, 2011; UNCTAD, 2014; UN Women 2015). Whilst the gendered impact of these policies is beyond the scope of this paper, it is important to outline the main mechanisms through which they affect women's economic empowerment in cities.

Fiscal policy aimed at investing in health and education, childcare services, infrastructure such as transport, energy and clean water as well as replacing family income taxation by

individual income taxation can have a direct impact on women's empowerment and wellbeing in cities (UN Habitat 2011; Elborgh-Woytek et al., 2013; UN Women 2015). These interventions can significantly contribute to the reduction of women's dual burden and allow them to benefit from labour market participation. Some countries have carried out gender-responsive budget policing. For example, since 2005, Bangladesh has incorporated gender issues into its national budgeting process and 20 ministries now compile gender budgeting reports (World Bank, 2012b). By contrast, cuts in public expenditure which shrinks public support to households tend to expand women care duties. Public expenditure can also contribute to direct creation of jobs for women, especially in urban areas: public expenditure is in fact an important source of good quality jobs for women (UN Women, 2015).

As seen, export-oriented industries in emerging and developing countries often employ a disproportionately larger share of women than men. This implies that women's wage employment opportunities and work security are strongly affected by exchange rate management, with a devalued exchange rate generally more favourable than an overvalued ones (as the former makes domestic exports cheaper on international markets) (UN Habitat 2011). However, there are no universal rules here, as the consequence of exchange rate management also depend on the level and pattern of inflation and the level of opening to foreign financial flows.

Finally, the positioning of cities with respect to the international economy has great bearing on the empowerment and disempowerment of urban women. In particular, aiming to the status of 'world class cities' implies that their position and functioning in the world economy becomes the dominant factor in urban economic development planning and puts the pursuit of international investment as primary objective. For example, in Hanoi, as in cities throughout the world, efforts to 'modernise' have refocused the transportation system on mobility rather than on access. This has led to intense traffic congestion that has reduced access to the daily necessities, especially for those who do not own a motor vehicle (Daniel, et al. 2015). Further, 'world city' planning strategies see informal activities as undesirable and don't recognise their contribution to local economies. As a consequence, poor women's urban livelihoods suffer of neglect or are explicitly opposed. Another example of a negative consequence of the pursuit of world class city status is the case of South Africa which hosted the 2010 FIFA World Cup. In the process of achieving city 'beautification', about 100,000 street vendors, mostly women, were displaced and banned from the streets (Hedman, 2010). The organisation of mega-events such as World Cups or the Olympic Games tend to have negative effects on the livelihood of the urban poor, especially women.

Limitations of this review and of existing evidence and scope for further research

As mentioned above, the literature review performed for this paper did not reveal straightforward and unambiguous evidence of how different policy interventions have been performing in countries at different stages of urbanisation, and whether their impact on women empowerment varies under different political or economic contexts. These are complex research questions which require comprehensive research project to be addressed. Additional problems rest in the nature of the existing evidence on topics linked to urbanisation and the (economic) lives of women in cities. Most of the literature focuses on analysing the problems faced by women in cities and the constraints that they face in economic (and non-economic) empowerment. This analysis usually also identifies solutions and policy recommendations, but discussion and evidence of the actual implementation and impact of these solutions is much more limited. The main reason is that many of these interventions have simply not been implemented yet, and even when they are, their impact has rarely been assessed. Particularly rare is analysis of impact from a gender perspective – meaning not only the differentiated impact between men and women, but also an analysis of how gender roles have evolved as a result of the interventions.

These gaps in the literature open several windows of opportunities for further research on the topic, especially country-specific primary research on the impact of the recommended policies and interventions.

Policy recommendations

- Understanding better contribution to cities' economy

The urban livelihoods of women – especially poor women, are concentrated in the informal and domestic sector, which are unofficial working sectors. This implies that they are not misrepresented in statistical reports. Improving the data collection on women's activities in developing countries should be a priority. It will allow to better understand their situations and needs. This can be done by investing in statistical offices in cities to allow them to put a bigger effort into collecting data on women employed in domestic work. The crucial information the inspectors should be focusing on are, among others, women's time allocation between domestic tasks, the time spent traveling during the day, the financial and physical resources needed to complete all allocated tasks during the day (price of transportation for example) and their safety perception in streets and urban transportation. Calculating a monetary equivalent to the work they undertake could also be an interesting and useful way to compare their contributions to those of their rural counterparts and men.

- Acknowledging informal wage employment in urban areas

As women are overrepresented in the urban informal sector, governments should formally recognise the sectors in which informal wages and female workers are dominant. Legal status and recognition as workers is particularly important to increase the visibility of domestic workers and homeworkers (see the Chronic Poverty Advisory Network's [Employment Policy Guide \(2013\)](#) for a more in-depth analysis on this intervention area). Specifically, in an urban context, a significant fraction of these informal workers are street vendors. Governments should work towards, first, protecting them from evictions and harassment and second, giving them the ability to organise themselves and to have a voice through the creation of formal linkage between them. This second recommendation would give these informal urban female workers a bargaining power and opportunity for asserting some form of leadership. An example of a successful measure following this path is the Women's Network of Street and Market Vendors of Lima, Peru which aims at recognising women working as street vendors into small-scale networks and enhance their presence inside their own organisations and in the public sphere.

Undertaking an informal employment underlines a serious risk of exploitation. Protecting informal workers should therefore be a priority. This can be done by an extension of labour legislation to informal sector activities. Inclusion in minimum wages legislation for both domestic workers and homeworkers, along with the promotion of written contracts homeworkers are perhaps the two (see the Chronic Poverty Advisory Network's [Employment Policy Guide \(2013\)](#) for a more in-depth analysis on this intervention area).

- Reinforcing the status of female workers in wage employment sectors

Strengthening the labour legislation (minimum wages, social protection) in the formal is crucial for both formal sector workers and informal sector. Indeed, minimum wage in the manufacturing sector for example, can play an important role by setting the example and setting reference wage, enforce wage floor and have positive spillover effects for the informal sector.

Even when women undertake a formal wage employment, they are subject to risk of exploitation. In the garment sector in Bangladesh for example, women have contracts and yet suffer from exploitation. These countries strategically favour women employment in order to reduce production costs. Policy should work towards putting an end to exploitation

of women in the formal sector. This requires stricter legislations, stricter punishments and investment to allow for more inspections in factories.

- Supporting women entrepreneurs

There are more diverse and numerous opportunities for entrepreneurship in urban areas, both in the formal and the informal sector. Women, however, face discrimination and disadvantages when trying to build or managing their own businesses. There is a need for trainings tailored to women's needs in order to give them the tools they might be missing and to overcome some disadvantages. Another recommendation would be to encourage governments to facilitate business registration and taxation systems for women.

Including women financially is perhaps one of the priorities in terms of policy design. This can be done by supplying with financial services tailored to women-led enterprises. Linking for formal and informal financial systems, linking social protection with financial services, harvesting the digital revolution for the poorest are key areas of work which are developed in the Chronic Poverty Advisory Network's [Financial Inclusion Policy Guide](#) (2015).

- Encouraging women's activity outside the household by facilitating their mobility

Women's mobility is constrained by domestic duties such as child care and also by the lack of security in public spaces, especially in urban areas. As a result, provision of affordable childcare services is a first step towards women's empowerment. Increasing the level of security in public transportation is also a key intervention area. This can be done through women only transportations, adapted pricing systems and the inclusion of women in participatory in urban planning consultations. Transportation routes and schedules are based on the assumption that people's mobility patterns are those of men. Urban planning must incorporate that specific needs of women in its design. Building inclusive cities is possible only if women's needs and mobility patterns are closely studied and seriously taken into account.

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