



## Gender and Labour in the Global South

### Video Transcript

#### Unpaid reproductive work

CHRISTINE BIGLER: This week, we will be dealing with the following three topics:

1. Unpaid, reproductive care work and its impact on labour market participation
2. The relevance of financial inclusion, and
3. The role of public policies in access to decent work.

In this video, we will focus on reproductive work and the lack of social protection for informal workers. Let's start with a look at reproductive and unpaid care work. Roka Bal Kumari is a Nepali street vendor. She describes a day in her life.

ROKA BAL KUMARI: I wake up at around 5:30 am when the alarm rings and my daughter has to go to school. I make tea for her and comb her hair. She then has the tea and leaves for school and then I make tea for my son as well. He also leaves, saying his friends are calling him. He doesn't do any work and he just slips away. I have to go get water from the local water spout and cook food. It takes me one to two hours. I have to be done cooking the food by 9 am. At 9, my daughter comes back from school and then I have to feed her and send her back to school. After sending her back to school, I have to feed their dad and then he has his medicine and sleeps for a while. Then I feel a bit tired and lazy, so if I have to wash clothes, then I do that, otherwise I also take a nap for 1 to 2 hours. I then wake up at around 2 or 3 pm. If I washed clothes earlier, then I pick and fold them into place. Then I make tea, after which it will be just the right time to cook dinner. I make the food ready and we will have had our dinner by 6 to 7 pm.

CHRISTINE BIGLER: Roka's day is filled with unpaid care work. This kind of work is necessary to sustain the labour force and the labour market. However, unpaid care work is often overlooked, especially in policy development. When developing labour market policies, unpaid care work must be considered. Unpaid care work has a big impact on the participation of women and men in the labour market. Experience shows that the formulation and implementation of labour market policies lack a gender perspective. Policies are often gender blind. To develop gender-responsive policies, both the wider political economy and the social context have to be considered.



In the next sequence, we will meet Sangita Nepali. She earns her living as a domestic worker in Nepal. The sequence shows Sangita's difficulties in her workplace and the lack of protection mechanisms she experiences as an informal worker.

SANGITA NEPALI: Some years back when I used to work at a house in Jawalakhel, there was a gas leak there. There, I got caught in a fire. I used to have such long hair; everything got burned, my stomach and arms, all of it was burnt. The people that I worked for left me at Bir hospital and ran away. They just left an unconscious person and ran. The medical doctors told me that I would have to stay there for 15 days. Even in such a situation, my husband did not check up on me. I was severely wounded, and my wounds were filled with pus, but I woke up from the hospital and left to go work. There was so much pus in the wound around my stomach. I was going through such a difficult time, but my husband did not even care to look after me or check up.

CHRISTINE BIGLER: Informal workers are not protected and have no legal rights. They cannot profit from social protection, such as sick leave or maternity leave. Almost all stakeholders see the shift from informal to formal employment as a desirable step towards decent working conditions. Governments in the Global South are making efforts, together with trade unionists, activists and other civil society organisations, to increase the share of formal employment. The shift from informal to formal employment can be done in different ways:

1. By regulating informal enterprises
2. By regulating informal employment
3. By providing social protection to informal workers, and
4. By creating more jobs in the formal sector

Only a gender-equal, sustainable labour market can provide decent working conditions for women. To achieve this objective, governments need to support a shift towards formal employment, gender-responsive legislation, and policies that consider unpaid work.