

Labor from a Gender Perspective

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Some of the main obstacles in the achievement of gender equality are stereotypes and prejudices about gender roles. In the majority of cases, it is believed that women hold a role in the private sphere (even though men continue to be “heads” of families). Whereas in the public sphere, especially business and politics, belongs to men. However, despite the guaranteed gender equality in laws, in practice and everyday life, the customary patriarchal norms and attitudes still stubbornly persist and represent obstacles for women’s enjoyment of legally guaranteed rights.

Legislative framework provides protection against all forms of gender-based discrimination and violence in labor and employment. It can be stated that the labor laws of the Republic of Srpska (Entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina) became fully compatible with standards for gender equality. It can also be concluded that the laws are, in this sense, among the most advanced in the region. However, there are still difficulties and obstacles in realization of these rights in practice, especially in conditions of transition, economic crisis and recession.

Numerous studies and indicators suggest the existence of gender-based discrimination and inequality including harassment and sexual harassment, abuse and mobbing at work. These forms of discrimination and inequality are mostly suffered by women. Also, most of the problems for women are:

1. Inadequate access to the labor market: The rate of women’s participation in the labor force is lower. And the women’s unemployment rate is higher than that of the men’s. In addition, many women are, as the International Labor Organization calls them “discouraged workers.” Namely, this means female workers who are not included in statistics on unemployment. This is because they do not actively seek employment, although they want to work because they feel that there is no work for them. Or they face discrimination or structural, social or cultural barriers.
2. High level of Unpaid Work Burden on Women in the area of care economy (work at home; child care; care for the elderly; care for the sick; care for adult

male family members; work in rural households and farms; unpaid work of women in a family business). The share of unpaid work in the gross domestic product is still unknown. It is not only that the unpaid work does not provide any formal status and compensation for that work to women, but it is also not reflected as well in other entitlements, such as the right to health, pension and disability insurances as well as other rights.

3. The income gap: Women are often paid less than men for equal work or work of equal value. High educational attainment is not protection. In general, women also earn less than men throughout their lives. Therefore, women have less favorable conditions for pension insurance. They also receive lower pensions, even though they live longer than men.
4. The “glass ceiling”: Women are routinely passed over for promotions. The higher the position, the less likely that a woman will get it - even if she is equally or better qualified than her male colleagues. Women who manage to break through the so-called “glass ceiling” to reach decision-making positions remain the exception to the rule. This is because even in sectors dominated by women and where there are more women in managerial positions, a disproportionate number of men reach the managerial positions.

The main reason for all these problems is discrimination against women. Most often, women are punished because of their sex as mothers or potential mothers. Many employers are unreasonably afraid of the possible costs and problems that can be caused by the maternity of female workers.

It is necessary to point out that gender discrimination at work will not disappear by itself nor be eliminated spontaneously by the market. The elimination of discrimination requires conscious, focused and consistent efforts involved in the process over a longer period of time. Work in the field of gender equality in labor and employment requires a multi-sectoral approach; engagement of all competent institutions and stakeholders of the society at all levels. The long-term process of changing perceptions of gender equality in the end will be valuable for all. Some positive steps towards this goal are evident, but there is still lot of work to be done. Some of the recommendations are: implementation of promotional programs and campaigns to change the prejudices against women in managerial positions; raising the awareness at all levels against the

existing gender stereotypes in society; harmonization of professional and private life for both genders; and investment in facilities for the care of children and the elderly with appropriate working hours. We all have a mission to work together for equal rights, equal opportunities and equal benefits.