

# **The Case for Pay and Employment Equity: Business and Human Rights Imperatives**

by Mary Cornish and Fay Faraday

Presenter: Mary Cornish

## **Abstract**

Part I of the paper will review the world-wide patterns of systemic discrimination, economic inequality and poverty which women face in an era of globalization, showing how labour markets provide vastly different and inferior benefits to women than men. Part II will review the business imperatives for finding solutions to this global crisis including the short and long term benefits of “equitable” labour markets and corporate social responsibility to stimulating economic growth, business prosperity and sustainable development. Part III will review the critical role played by employment and pay equity laws and policies as two of the major levers for transforming or “engendering” the labour market and promoting equitable economic growth. Part IV of the paper sets out the world-wide consensus on the obligations of governments, employers and unions to redress these inequities, reflected in international human rights and labour instruments and policies. The Annex to the paper details the pay and employment equity obligations flowing from these instruments that should inform the design for achieving pay and employment equity in national and local labour markets. Part V of the paper concludes by highlighting the key issues that need to be addressed by governments, employers and unions as they seek to implement effective pay and employment equity mechanisms, including the need to take a multi-faceted systemic approach to women’s economic equality; the challenges provided by the concentration of women in the expanding and “precarious” informal economy; the multiple disadvantages faced by women as a result of their race, ethnicity, indigenous status, disability, culture, language, poverty and burden of reproductive and family responsibilities; the key equality roles played by state actors, unions, employers and civil society; and finally, the need for effective and accessible enforcement mechanisms.