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IN THE CROSSROADS OF DECISIONS: WORK AND FAMILY PATHS OF WOMEN ON THE PATH TOWARDS CONCILIATION

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Abstract: A way to see the transformation of a woman's life is through the study of life itineraries. These are considered historical events, economic, demographic, social and cultural changes and define the way in which they shape or configure the lives of women (Blanco, 2011). Each change allows for different ramifications or styles in the way you live. To develop this investigation, we took a battery of questions about itineraries of the Guzmán-Raya brain drain questionnaire (2020) from which, through the participation of women from Guanajuato, Mexico (n=1,028), different ramifications were generated up to achieve 6 itineraries. Within the results there is a statistically significant association (chi²=0.000, gl=3; chi²=0.000, gl=6; chi²=0.005, gl=9) to categorize the reasons that women die to leave or do one pause in the labor market and life itineraries.

The results confirm that exiting the labor market is mainly based on situations considered personal, followed by conciliation reasons, market concerns and finally public policies. However, many of these personal situations can be modified with the creation of policies that allow improvements in work and personal support issues, as well as family-work reconciliation will reduce its impact on women deciding to leave the labor market.

Keywords: work-family, life itineraries, public policies, women's lifestyles, gender decisions

INTRODUCTION

Reconciling work and family life is a crucial challenge for women all over the world, and the region of Guanajuato, Mexico, is not an exception. In this introduction, we will explore the complex intersection between work and family in the lives of Guanajuatense women, highlighting the importance of understanding their work and family trajectories.

The transformation of gender roles and family dynamics in recent decades has

generated a growing need to balance work responsibilities with family commitments. In this context, there is a need to understand how women manage this duality in their daily lives and how these decisions affect their participation in the labor market.

The theory of itineraries, developed by Suárez (1992) and Blanco (2011) offers a useful perspective to understand the trajectories of women's lives, focusing on the interrelationship between family and work factors. This theory suggests that women experience decisive moments in their lives that influence their decisions about work and family, shaping their work and family itineraries.

By analyzing the family and work trajectories of Guanajuatense women, we can identify common patrons and better understand how these women navigate the complexities of balancing work and family. Through this analysis, we can examine how decisions made at key moments, such as marriage, the birth of children and job opportunities, impact the course of their lives.

It is important to keep in mind that women's decisions are influenced by a variety of factors, including socioeconomic and cultural contexts. In Mexico, many women face challenges in accessing the labor market due to barriers such as gender discrimination and family responsibilities.

However, Guanajuatense women also show remarkable resilience and the ability to adapt to changing circumstances. Often, they rely on family strategies and community support ne2rks to overcome obstacles and achieve a balance between work and family life.

In addition to facing individual challenges, women are also influenced by structural factors, such as labor and conciliation policies. The lack of adequate support policies can limit women's opportunities to fully participate in the labor market and make it difficult to

reconcile work and family life.

In this investigation, data collected on the work and family relationships of Guanajuatense women will be analyzed, focusing on how these women manage their work and family responsibilities in a specific cultural and socioeconomic context. By better understanding the experiences of these women, we can inform policies and programs that promote gender equality and facilitate reconciliation between work and family life in Guanajuato and beyond.

LIFE ITINERARIES STUDIO

The study of women's family and labor trajectories provides a fundamental perspective to understand how these aspects interrelate in the lives of women, especially in contexts such as Mexico. Each itinerary, marked by specific moments in a woman's life, reveals how decisions related to her family and work influence her life course.

Suárez (1992) states that, when analyzing women's lives, it is crucial to consider how work and family histories are intertwined, along with reproductive experiences, across different generations. This intertwining drives changes in women's itineraries over time, moving from situations where they maintain their participation in the labor market to others where they withdraw due to personal circumstances. Every change in a woman's life is influenced by the temporal context in which it occurs (Burnay et al. 2013).

According to the author in the itinerary study, it is essential to examine in detail each decision made by the women and the travel sectors that follow. Comparing different itineraries and their possible combinations allows us to understand how women make decisions at specific moments in their lives and how these decisions shape their trajectory over time. However, retrospective analysis

may miss important details that connect different moments in a woman's life (Elder & Shanahan, 2006).

The itineraries unfold from several triggering questions (Blanco, 2011 & Kohli, 2007), and differences in times and specific moments generate discontinuities between women's routes. Despite these differences, the itineraries converge at crucial moments in the life cycle, such as marriage, the birth of children and decisions about continuing work during the home or dedication to domestic tasks.

Cinamon and Rich (2014), for their part, explain that the concept of relationships between work and family, derived from social role theory, has been integrated into career theory to explain how people develop identities and perform diverse roles both at work and within the family.

In Mexico, many adult women find it easier to integrate into the labor market due to implemented family strategies. These strategies include the support provided by adult women to young women, both in the care of their children and in support to continue with their professional careers (Christenson, García & Oliveira, 1989). This dynamic is fundamental to facilitate the labor insertion of young women without social prisons that limit their options.

The interrelationship between demands at work and the lack of opportunities for advancement in work for women can be explained through generational differences and changes in values associated with work (Oliveira & García, 1988). Perceptions about work vary between generations, influenced by culture and the conception of the usefulness of work. While for some previous generations work was fundamental to achieving better social positions, for more recent generations it could be seen mainly as a means to cover needs or to enjoy personal passions.

Tapia et al. (2016) indicate that reconciliation between work and family refers to social commitments reached between employers and employees during collective bargaining processes, with the aim of facilitating care for minors or dependent people who are more compatible with their work responsibilities.

This evolution in the value of work could influence women's decisions regarding their participation in the labor market. Although some women may leave work to care for their families, these decisions are complex and influenced by multiple factors. The generational difference is also reflected in the perception of men and women about work and its meaning in personal dignity (Tepichin, 2010).

Today, it is increasingly common for women to perform dual roles, combining work responsibilities with domestic activities. The ability to reconcile these roles increases the probability that women will choose to remain in the labor market. However, limited opportunities for advancement can be a determining factor in leaving work, especially when family needs are a priority at work (Mainiero & Sullivan 2005, 2006).

Perhaps this is the most important reason that women give the most weight to their decision to temporarily or definitively leave their job.

METHODOLOGY

INSTRUMENT

The itinerary theory (Suárez, 1992) indicates that these are the paths that women have had during their lives and particularly in their professional career. The decisive moments of life generate women's decision-making and allow them to have options about the path this will take.

To be able to identify the different

itineraries of women, we took the battery of questions about itineraries from the brain drain questionnaire by Guzmán-Raya (2020). This questionnaire identifies elements about the brain drain of women at home and has a specific battery to identify life itineraries. This battery is made up of the question: What is your current work situation? Family business without paid work, Not working and looking for work, Jubilated, Situation of incapacity, dedicates full time to homework, Not working, other), Have you ever wanted to work? (dichotomous answer option: yes, no) and How many times have you stopped working? (response options: 1, 2, 3, 4 times or more) What were the reasons for stopping work? (marriage or couple, low salary, care for a family member, household chores, studies, inadequate working conditions, work environment, termination of contract, undressed, other). These questions correspond to the trajectory of life and enable the generation of itineraries.

Six itineraries were defined by the number of times women left the labor market and their current situation. However, each one of them is loaded with different factors that are analyzed and that form part of the sociodemographic questions of the questionnaire, such as the time that has remained outside the labor market and its reasons, as well as the number of children that have remained. And some others that can influence such as age, the level of education itself, the couple (in the case of having one), the priests, their civil situation and the level of age where they are located.

Each itinerary is distinguished between women in a brain drain situation. Only itinerary 1 will give an answer to those women who have not had a brain drain, while itinerary 2 to 5 will be quiet, for reasons of which there will be more delay, they will leave the labor market and itinerary number 6 will be for those women who has not entered the labor

market and has therefore dedicated himself to his home work for a full period of time.

The graphic representation in Figure 1 shows the distribution of women according to each of the identified itineraries. Women are categorized into 2 main groups: those who had paid or extra-domestic employment at that moment and those who dedicated themselves to home work for a full time. In turn, each of these groups is subdivided into 2 categories: those women who have only had extra-domestic employment and those who have experienced one or more interruptions in their professional career.

The second group consists of women who have had at least one break in their work experience and those who, since leaving university, have only performed domestic work or have dedicated themselves exclusively to household chores. This classification makes it possible to identify women who currently maintain an extra-domestic job, those who have the same condition but have experienced breaks in their career, and those who currently only carry out domestic work, differentiating them between those who have taken breaks and those who do not.

Based on the above, the distribution of the different itineraries is configured in the following way:

- Itinerary 1: Women who, since leaving university, have only worked outside the home.
- Itinerary 2: Women with extradomestic employment today, but who have experienced an interruption in their professional career.
- Itinerary 3: Women with extradomestic employment today, but who have experienced pauses in their professional career.
- Itinerary 4: Women with extradomestic employment today, but

who have experienced three or more interruptions in their professional career.

- Itinerary 5: Women with current domestic employment and who have experienced one or more breaks in their professional career.
- Itinerary 6: Women who, since leaving university, have only performed domestic work.

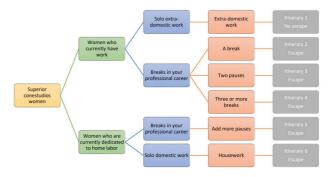


Figure 1. Definition of each itinerary according to labor market outcomes.

RESULTS

Considering the creation of 6 itineraries, the women of the study can be classified in each of them according to figure 2. In route 1 there are 466 women, representative of those who have not experienced brain drain. From itinerary 2 to 5, there are 553 women who have experienced one to four breaks or definitive exits from the job market. In itinerary 6, new women are identified who, since their university graduation, have dedicated themselves for a full time or exclusively to their home labors. Therefore, from itineraries 2 to 6, there are a total of 562 women who formed part of the brain drain there.



Figure 2. Distribution of women by route and brain drain.

Figure 3 shows the meaning of each of the colors that are presented in the table of 6 itineraries, where the blue is the work period and the beige color is the pause time.

Color	Meaning	Escape situation
	Break	Brain drain
	Extra-domestic work	No escape

Figure 3. Meaning of colors on itineraries

The itineraries, determined by the breaks in the women's professional career, are shown in figure 4. It details their situation when graduating, the continuity of work outside the home, the breaks or changes in the job, the domestic dedication for a full time and their current employment situation at the time of the survey.

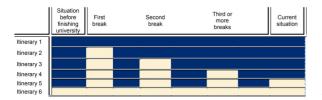


Figure 4. Itineraries

The itineraries in figure 5 show the number of women in each break and its duration, classified into specific time periods. The number of children on each itinerary is also included. It is crucial to highlight that, even though this information is shown together, there is no direct correlation between the number of children and the duration of breaks in extra-domestic work. This presentation simply provides additional details about itineraries and does not imply that maternity is the specific reason for each departure from extra-domestic employment.

The questionnaire included a question designed to ask the reasons behind women's decisions to abandon or not enter the labor market, classified into four types according to the Brain Drain Normative Model, as detailed in table 1. The first category encompasses personal decisions, such as motherhood or marriage. The second includes labor decisions influenced by improved potential in the labor market. The third comprises decisions taken as a result of reconciling work and personal life. Finally, public policies include decisions susceptible to modification through state interventions.

These reasons are classified into three categories in the same table. The first shows the classification for personal and occupational reasons. The second categorizes reasons into personal, labor and conciliation. The third part divides them into labor, personal, political and conciliation reasons. This approach allows us to identify how to change reasons before state interventions or improve work circumstances. Personal situations, such as marriage, studies, illness, change of residence, motherhood and search for better opportunities, are personal decisions that vary according to conciliation, work or government interventions.

Reasons presented	Two categories	Three categories	Four categories
Marriage or couple	Personal	Personal	Personal
My studies	Personal	Personal	Personal
Illness	Personal	Personal	Personal
Change of residence	Personal	Personal	Personal
Maternity	Personal	Personal	Personal
Search for better opportunities	Personal	Personal	Personal
Home tasks	Personal	Conciliation	Conciliation
Care for a family member (kids, fathers, fathers, brothers, relatives with some disability)	Personal	Conciliation	Policy
Inadequate working conditions	Labor	Conciliation	Policy
Work environment	Labor	Labor	Labor
Low salary	Labor	Labor	Policy
Termination of contract	Labor	Labor	Policy
Jubilation	Labor	Labor	Policy

Itinerary 1								
	Without children	186						
	A girl	119						
	2 kids	112						
	Three boys or more	49						
Itinerary 2								
Less than 6 months	Without children	100	111					
Between 6 and 12 months	A girl	82	83					
More than a year until a year and a half	2 kids	70	29					
More than a year and half a year	Three boys or more	30	20					
More than 2 years			39					
Itinerary 3								
Less than 6 months	Without children	52	73	75				
Between 6 and 12 months	A girl	46	47	35				
More than a year until a year and a half	2 kids	46	11	18				
More than a year and half a year	Three boys or more	9	7	4	_			
More than 2 years			15	21	_			
Itinerary 4								
Less than 6 months	Without children	25	32	32		37	21	
Between 6 and 12 months	A girl	20	19	20		15	6	
More than a year until a year and a half	2 kids	15	3	9		4	2	
More than a year and half a year	Three boys or more	9	7	4		4	1	
More than 2 years			8	4		9	2	
Itinerary 5								
Less than 6 months	Without children	21	16	7		4	5	
Between 6 and 12 months	A girl	14	10	10		1		
More than a year until a year and a half	2 kids	11	5	4		2		
More than a year and half a year	Three boys or more	3	3	3				
More than 2 years			15	4				
Itinerary 6								
	A girl	2						
	2 kids	4						
	Three boys or more	3						

Figure 5. Itineraries defined by the entrances and exits of the labor market and the time for each one and the number of children that have women in each one.

Decease to leave the job weather	2 categories		Three categories		Four categories	
Reasons to leave the job market	Classification	%	Classification	%	Classification	%
Termination of contract	Labor	34.9	Labor	34.9	Policy	34.9
Care for a family member (children, fathers, brothers, family with some disability)	Personal	19.0	Conciliation	19.9	Policy	19.0
Inadequate working conditions	Labor	10.1	Conciliation	10.1	Policy	10.1
My studies	Personal	9.0	Personal	9.0	Personal	9.0
Low salary	Labor	6.1	Labor	6.1	Policy	6.1
Marriage or couple	Personal	5.6	Personal	5.6	Personal	5.6
Work environment	Labor	5.2	Labor	5.2	Labor	5.2

D	2 categories		Three categories		Four categories	
Reasons to leave the job market	Classification	%	Classification	%	Classification	%
Change of residence	Personal	2.5	Personal	2.5	Personal	2.5
Home tasks	Personal	2.5	Conciliation	2.5	Conciliation	2.5
Illness	Personal	2.4	Personal	2.4	Personal	2.4
Search for better opportunities	Personal	1.6	Personal	1.6	Personal	1.6
Maternity	Personal	0.7	Personal	0.7	Personal	0.7
Jubilation	Labor	0.2	Labor	0.2	Policy	0.2

Table 2. Reasons for women to leave the labor market.

Itineraries		Person	al	Labor		
:4:	n	122		160	282	
itinerary 2	%	43.3%	ó	56.7%	100.0%	
:4:	n	66		87	153	
itinerary 3	%	43.1%	ó	56.9%	100.0%	
:4:	n	18		51	69	
itinerary 4	%	26.1%		73.9%	100.0%	
:4:	n	34		15	49	
itinerary 5	%	69.4%		30.6%	100.0%	
Total	n	240		313	553	
Total	%	43.4%		56.6%	100.0%	
		Value	gl	Asymptotic significance (bilateral)		Meaning
Pearson's chi-so	Pearson's chi-square		3	0.000		
Fisher's Exact Test		22,011				0.000

Table 3. Analysis of the association between itineraries and personal and labor reasons for stopping work.

Itineraries		Personal		Labor	Conciliation	Total
itim amamy 2	n	62		134	86	282
itinerary 2	%	22.0%		47.5%	30.5%	100.0%
:4:	n	29		69	55	153
itinerary 3	%	19.0%		45.1%	35.9%	100.0%
***	n	8		42	19	69
itinerary 4	%	11.6%	60.9%		27.5%	100.0%
:4:	n	22		12	15	49
itinerary 5	%	44.9%		24.5%	30.6%	100.0%
T 1	n	121		257	175	553
Total	%	21.9%	46.5%		31.6%	100.0%
		Value	gl	Asymptotic si	ignificance (bilateral)	Meaning
Pearson's chi-square		25,500	6	0.000		
Fisher's Exact Test		23,766				0.001

Table 4. Analysis of the association between itineraries and personal, labor and conciliation reasons for leaving work.

Table 1. Classification of reasons for leaving the labor market.

Once these categories were identified, association analysis was carried out with three and four categories: personal, work, conciliation and public policies. These analyzes will be carried out in relation to the itineraries, excluding numbers 1 and 6, since the first one did not register exits from the labor market, and in number 6 decisions related to extradomestic work were unknown.

Table 2 shows the frequencies of reasons why women are in the labor market for each of the categories. Here you can see which reasons are most common among women. The main reasons include termination of contract (34.9%), followed by family care responsibilities (19%), poor working conditions (10.1%), starting studies (9%), marriage or marital relationship (5.6%), work environment (5.2%), change residence (2.5%), dedication to home work (2.5%), illness (2.4%), search for better job opportunities (1.6%), motherhood (0.7%) and retirement (0.2%)

The results presented in table 3 reflect this distribution. Considering the specific type of itinerary, it is observed that 43.4% of the reasons provided correspond to personal reasons, while 56.6% are attributed to reasons related to the labor market.

Additional calculations include both the statistical χ^2 and Fisher's exact test, the latter being more appropriate for the number of cases per cell in a contingency table. A statistically significant association was found (χ^2 =21.898, p=0.000, df=3, Fisher's Exact Measure=22.011, p=0.000) when categorizing data between work and personal reasons. Therefore, the reasons behind talent leakage in itineraries of 2 to 4 (56.7%, 56.9%, 73.9% respectively) are related to labor concerns, while in itinerary 5 (69.4%) they are attributed

to personal reasons.

The analysis of three categories (personal, work and conciliation) is reflected in the results presented in table 4. Without considering the specific type of itinerary, 21.9% of the proportionate reasons correspond to personal reasons, while 46.5 % is attributed to work reasons and the remaining 31.6% to conciliation questions.

A statistically significant association was found (χ ² =25.500, p=0.000, df=6; Fisher's Exact Measure=23.766, p=0.001) between itineraries and reasons related to personal, work and conciliation aspects. The reasons behind talent leakage in itineraries from 2 to 4 continue to be mostly attributable to the labor market (47.5%, 45.1%, 60.9% respectively).

In route 5, 44.9% relates to personal reasons and 30.6% to conciliation aspects. These results show how decisions regarding the labor market cannot be simply personal, but are also influenced by external factors such as conciliation.

The analysis with four categories is presented in table 5, showing a significant association (χ ² = 23.721, p=0.005, gl=9; Fisher's Exact Measure=21.547, p=0.006) between the itineraries and the reasons related to aspects personal, labor, conciliation and public policies. The reasons behind the flight of talent in the itineraries of 2 to 4 are transforming, mostly attributing to questions that can be addressed through public policies (69.5%, 73.9%, 81.2% respectively).

In route 5, 49% of the reasons correspond to public policies, while 44.9% relate to personal reasons. In general, when considering all the reasons provided, regardless of the type of itinerary, 70.3% are associated with public policies, while personal reasons constitute 21.9%. Furthermore, 5.2% corresponds to labor reasons and the remaining 2.5% relates to conciliation aspects.

Itinerary	Pe	ersonal	Labor	Conciliation	Policies	Total
:4:	n	62	15	9	196	282
itinerary 2	%	22.0%	5.3%	3.2%	69.5%	100.0%
	n	29	9	2	113	153
itinerary 3	%	19.0%	5.9%	1.3%	73.9%	100.0%
:4:	n	8	4	1	56	69
itinerary 4	%	11.6%	5.8%	1.4%	81.2%	100.0%
=	n	22	1	2	24	49
itinerary 5	%	44.9%	2.0%	4.1%	49.0%	100.0%
T. (1	n	121	29	14	389	553
Total	%	21.9%	5.2%	2.5%	70.3%	100.0%
		Value	gl	Asymptotic significance (bilateral)	Meaning	
Pearson's chi-s	quare	23,721	9	0.005		
Fisher's Exact	Test	21,547			0.006	

Table 5. Analysis of the association between itineraries and personal, labor, conciliation and intervention reasons for public policies to stop working.

CONCLUSIONS

Previous challenges reflect significant changes in reasons that influence women's decisions, which transition from personal to conciliation, labor and public policy considerations. In the Brain Drain Normative Model, life itineraries are composed of these four crucial elements (Guzmán-Raya & Martínez-Hernández, 2022).

The reconciliation between family and work life is affected by multiple factors, some of which are outside the direct control of women. Clear examples such as long working hours, considerable workload and lack of support from the organization have a negative impact on the balance between work and family life, which has repercussions on the well-being of employees (Jiménez & Aravena, 2015). Public policies, organizational rules and labor market dynamics are key elements that influence decisions about career and personal life. Even though personal and work situations can be modified by individual strategies or organizational decisions, public policies have the potential to address systemic aspects that

directly impact women's experiences.

The results of this study confirm that the reasons behind labor market outcomes are varied, but most of them are related to personal concerns, followed by conciliation reasons, labor market situations and, to a lesser extent, public policy influences. However, it is crucial to highlight that many of these personal situations can be addressed through policies that improve working conditions and provide greater personal support, which can reduce the impact of family-work reconciliation on women's decisions regarding remaining the abandon the labor market.

The complex interaction between family and work life represents a significant challenge for many women, especially in contexts like Guanajuato, Mexico. The detailed analysis of how these women manage this duality provides a deeper understanding of their life trajectories and highlights the importance of addressing the systemic barriers they face in their quest for balance and personal and professional achievement.

DISCUSSION

The discussion of the results obtained in the study on the interactions between the family and work life of Guanajuatense women offers a deep and enriching perspective on the challenges that these women face in the balance of multiple roles. This on-the-ground analysis implies understanding the results themselves, but also placing them within a broader context that addresses the evolution of perceptions about work, as well as social prisons and limitations of opportunities that women face in their daily lives.

Firstly, it is necessary to review how the evolution of perceptions about work has evolved considerably over time, reflecting cultural and significant socioeconomic changes. It is evident that the youngest generations can have a different vision of work compared to their predecessors. While some people still consider the work as a necessity to guarantee economic income, others see it as an opportunity to pursue personal passions or achieve greater material prosperity. This transformation in work attitudes influences women's decisions in terms of participation in the labor market and their motivations to stay in it.

As a second point, special emphasis must be placed on social pressures and limitations of opportunities. Women face a series of social prisons and limited opportunities that affect their decisions related to work and family. Ultimately, these decisions are influenced by economic necessity, social pressure to comply with traditional gender roles and limited opportunities for professional advancement. Despite advances in gender equality, obstacles persist that hinder the full participation of women in the labor market and their professional progress.

A third point is identifying the dual roles and the balance necessary for women.

Nowadays, many women find themselves taking on dual roles, combining work and family responsibilities. This balance between family and work life can be especially challenging, especially when facing obstacles to advancing professionally.

Decisions about staying in the labor market are influenced by a variety of factors, including the need to take care of the family, available work opportunities and labor and conciliation policies.

The balance between family and work life is a constant concern for Guanajuatense women. Exploring how these women navigate this dynamic complex provides a unique insight into the intersection between work and family in Mexican society. It is essential to understand the life paths of these women to develop policies and programs that promote gender equality and facilitate reconciliation between work and family life.

Future implications must Addressing the specific challenges facing women in Guanajuato and Mexico in general, if we can work towards a more equitable and sustainable future for everyone. It is crucial that those responsible for formulating policies and employers recognize and address the systemic barriers facing women, promoting inclusive and flexible work environments that support the equitable participation of men and women in the labor market. By developing policies and programs that address these specific needs, progress can be made to create a fairer and more equitable society for all its members.

In other words, in a world in constant evolution, where women play increasingly diverse and complex roles, the reconciliation between work and family life has become a social and economic imperative.

Throughout this article, the labor and family trajectories of Guanajuatense women have been explored, examining how these women navigate the complex intersection between work and family in a specific cultural and socioeconomic context. From the analysis of life itineraries to the identification of the reasons behind labor decisions, light has been shed on the experiences of these women and the strengths that shape their lives.

What emerges is a multifaceted portrait of the lives of women, marked by resilience, determination and the capacity for adaptation. These women on the ground face challenges in accessing the labor market and balancing family responsibilities, but they also struggle against structural and cultural barriers that limit their opportunities.

It is essential to recognize the value and

contribution of these women to society, as well as working to eliminate the barriers that hinder their progress. This means advocating for policies and programs that promote gender equality, facilitate reconciliation between work and family life and create equitable opportunities for all women, regardless of their socioeconomic or cultural origin.

Furthermore, on the ground, the lives of women are improving, but we are also building a fairer, more inclusive and prosperous society for all. In a world where progress and change are inevitable, it is our responsibility to ensure that nothing falls behind and that all of you are heard and valued.

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