IMF Chief Christine Lagarde, calling attention to the findings of the paper, “Women, Work, and the Economy,” made the case for policymakers to shift into high gear and give women equal opportunities to participate in the work force.

“Our latest study shows that despite some improvements, progress toward leveling the playing field for women has stalled,” said Lagarde. “Raising women’s participation in labor markets would benefit all in a number of ways.” For example, she noted, if the number of female workers was raised to the same level as that of men in the United Arab Emirates, GDP would expand by 12 percent, in Japan by 9 percent, and in the United States by 5 percent.

The paper points to a variety of obstacles to participation.

**The number of women in the workforce remains far below that of men the world over—only about half of women of working age are employed. Women account for most unpaid work, and when they are paid, they are overrepresented in the informal sector and among the poor, and they continue to be paid less than men for the same jobs,” Lagarde said.**

Lagarde urged policymakers around the world to take action and implement policies that tear down obstacles for women, laying out some key recommendations from the paper:

**Government tax and spending policies as well as labor market regulation can be reformed to help boost female employment,” Lagarde said. “For example, taxing individual rather than family income—which in many economies imposes a higher marginal tax on the second earner in households—would encourage women to seek employment.”**

Linking social benefits to participation in the workforce, training, or active labor market programs can also help increase female employment, she said, as would the availability of good and affordable childcare and greater opportunities for paternity and maternity leave.

For more recommendations and to read the whole analysis, [check out the study.](http://blog-imfdirect.imf.org/2013/09/23/lagarde-women-can-help-grow-the-world-economy/)

The IMF study was launched on the eve of Lagarde’s appearance on a panel in New York with Bill Clinton, Sheryl Sandberg, and Mo Ibrahim, as part of the [Clinton Global Initiative](http://www.clintonglobalinitiative.org/).