GLOBALISATION

a) Globalisation and equality between women and men

Globalisation trends and related policies are often thought to be gender-neutral, that is have similar impacts on women and men. However, a closer look at the way they affect people reveals significant gender-differentiated impacts.

What is meant by “globalisation”? Globalisation generally refers to policies and trends associated with market liberalisation. Such policies include reductions in tariff barriers, the reduction or elimination of restrictions on foreign investment, and the inclusion of services such as banking and insurance in trade regimes.

As a result, foreign goods, services and investment have an increasing share in national economies. Investment has led to employment growth in some areas but also increased competition between local production and imports. Market liberalisation has coincided with advances in telecommunications technology, which together have facilitated the global mobility of capital. The ease of relocation of firms and investors has increased competitive pressures among countries and insecurity among workers. Increased integration into the global economy also has reduced the ability of national governments to act independently.

How do gender-differentiated effects arise? The gender-differentiated effects of globalisation are associated with characteristics of society and the economy that reflect existing patterns of inequality between women and men, including:

- **Distribution of the labour force by sector.** In most countries women and men are distributed differently across manufacturing sectors, between the formal and informal sectors, and within agriculture. The uneven impact of globalisation by sector therefore has gender-based effects. These may include increased female employment in labour-intensive manufacturing, increased male unemployment in formerly-protected industrial sectors, new opportunities for agricultural exports for farmers with resources to increase production (more likely to be men), etc.

- **Areas of comparative advantage.** For many developing countries, an area of comparative advantage is low-wage labour-intensive employment such as garment manufacturing (in which women predominate). An export strategy based on low-wage female labour may increase the proportion of women in the labour force but also increase the overall wage gap between women and men and decrease the prospects for closing this gap.

- **Distribution of productive assets.** The ability to benefit from new opportunities is related to access to productive assets – including education, skills, property, credit – to which women have less access than men.

- **Distribution of unpaid household labour between women and men.** Women continue to carry a larger share than men of the work necessary to maintain families and the labour force. This necessary but unpaid work is generally taken for granted, with little attention to the impact of trade policy choices on workloads and economic opportunities.

What particular equality concerns have been raised? Globalisation can have positive as well as negative consequences. The challenge is to shape policies and processes so that they promote improved living standards and increased gender equality. Further monitoring and policy research on the impacts of globalisation are necessary. Areas for attention include:

- **Quality of jobs created.** Many new jobs in growth sectors have low wages, insecure tenure, and limited training or promotion prospects. These conditions may be exacerbated by the relaxation of labour standards (or reduced enforcement of standards) as a means to attract investment.

- **Downward pressures on wages and working conditions** where increasing numbers of workers must resort to lower-wage jobs and the informal sector. The increased use of subcontracting and low rates of unionisation also decrease the negotiating position of workers.

- **Decreased state investment in social services.** If decreased government revenues (with reduced tariffs and licensing fees) are compensated through decreased social services, women are more directly affected than men.
### Constructive responses to equality concerns in globalisation

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<th>WHAT</th>
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<td>Policy research on liberalisation measures that support gender equality.</td>
<td>To increase the knowledge base on the potential to shape liberalisation policies so that they support equality.</td>
<td>Support for research by governmental and non-governmental organisations on policy options related to the phasing of liberalisation, the targeting of adjustment measures (retraining, access to technology, access to credit), the links between social investment and economic growth, etc.</td>
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<td>Increased representation and more effective involvement of equality advocates in national and international trade policy discussions</td>
<td>To ensure that the concerns and views of equality advocates are represented and the issues debated.</td>
<td>Support for networking activities among organisations concerned with the impact of globalisation on different social groups and the equality impacts of market liberalisation. Also support for research and analysis to inform advocacy and the development of effective strategies for advocacy.</td>
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<td>Capacity development for consistent application of a gender perspective to policy decision-making in all areas relevant to globalisation, including macro-economic, trade, employment and adjustment policies.</td>
<td>To facilitate the development of policies that have positive impacts on gender equality (and to enable governments to fulfill commitments to mainstream a gender perspective in all policy decision-making).</td>
<td>Within governance and institution-strengthening initiatives, there are opportunities to build organisational capacity for applying gender equality perspectives to policy analysis and development. This could include strengthening data and information systems to generate sex-disaggregated data necessary for policy and planning; strengthening analytic skills of planners; modifying decision-making processes to require analysis of equality implications; and strengthening participatory mechanisms.</td>
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<td>Systematic monitoring of equity impacts.</td>
<td>To support more informed policy development at the international, regional and national levels.</td>
<td>Support for monitoring (data collection and analysis) by government and non-government organisations. Areas for monitoring include the implications for women and men of changes in employment, agricultural production, income, access to resources, workloads, health, etc.</td>
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### Further resources

**Organisations active on gender and globalisation issues**

- WIDE (Network Women in Development Europe). Advocacy organisation with a major focus on trade. To review programme descriptions and reports, see: <http://www.eurosur.org/wide/porteng.htm>
- UNIFEM. Women and trade is a current programme focus. Activities include seminars, research and the development of advocacy materials on gender and global trade. See: <http://www.unifem.udnp.org/ec_trad.htm>
- North South Institute. Research programme includes a study of globalisation’s impact on women’s health (looking at women workers in Bangladesh’s garment sector). See <http://www.nsi-ins.ca/research/research9.html#gender impacts>

**Reports (published or on the Internet)**