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Globalisation, Trade and Gender – The Key Concerns

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Introduction

Globalisation, one of the most debated issues of the late twentieth century and new millennium, has been described as a process of internationalisation, growing interdependence and less important national boundaries. Simply stated, a globalised world supposedly behaves as a single market. The process of globalisation is complex, creating risks and opportunities with asymmetric impact on different groups.

For gender relations, this impact has been manifold and complicated. Available literature suggests that African women are being further isolated and disempowered by globalisation and the trade and financial policies associated with it. As African economies in particular try to grapple with the challenges of globalisation, it is necessary to sharpen our knowledge of the general gender implications of globalisation as well as specific benefits of trade liberalisation.

This chapter attempts to raise the key concerns on globalisation, trade and gender. After the introduction: Section 2 briefly explains the concept of globalisation. Gender and globalisation is discussed in section 3. Section 4 focuses on gender dimensions of trade liberalisation. A brief discussion of gender implications of World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreements is discussed in section 5. The chapter gives examples of ongoing work on international trade and gender in section 6. We also point out areas where future research is required to enhance our knowledge in globalisation, trade and gender and also to strengthen the capacity of policy makers in trade negotiation and implementation. Finally section 7 raises key areas of concern, particularly for research, WTO agenda from a gender perspective, capacity building and advocacy.

What is Globalisation?

Globalisation refers to the growing interaction of countries in world trade, foreign direct investment and capital markets. It is characterised by increases in flows of trade, capital, and information as well as mobility of individuals across borders. It is multidimensional, affecting economic, cultural, environmental and other social relations between governments and nations. The globalisation process has been enhanced by technological advances in transport and communications, and a rapid liberalisation and deregulation of trade and capital flows at national and international levels.

Globalisation is also about international financial crises. It encapsulates the fear of workers in developed countries losing their jobs to lower cost countries. It reflects concerns by workers in developing countries that decisions affecting their lives are made in international corporations' offices far away from them. Globalisation involves opportunities as well as risks. The risks must be addressed at national and international levels to ensure that globalisation works for all.

However, whether we approach it from an opportunity or risk stance, the fact that poverty remains the greatest challenge in sub-Saharan Africa is a central consideration. Consequently, we must ask how Africa can reposition itself to take full advantage of globalisation by accelerating growth and reducing poverty. Empirical research has consistently shown that no country with closed and inward looking policies can achieve or sustain high growth rates. Hence, the issue of Africa's share in the world trade cannot be ignored. According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF 2001), 'Africa's share in the world trade has dwindled, foreign direct investment in most countries has remained at very low levels, and the income gap relative to advanced countries has widened'.

Some scholars argue that Africa's integration into the world economy must be driven by its major goals of faster economic growth and development, and poverty reduction. To achieve these, implementing strong and comprehensive domestic policies to consolidate macroeconomic stability becomes paramount. These would ensure human resource development; improve basic infrastructure; spur agricultural development; promote a good banking system and improve Africa's trade performance. They would also guarantee good governance and bolster regional integration and increased economic co-operation thereby strengthening Africa's bargaining power within the global trading system. Others argue that a comprehensive reform agenda is not enough. Major institutional reforms are often necessary. In particular, limiting the role of the state to the delivery essential public services while promoting a dynamic private sector is crucial. Similarly a liberal and transparent regulatory framework and partnership between public and private sectors, including the civil society, should be promoted.

While debate on the economic dimensions and impact of globalisation continues, there appears to be a consensus that the process of globalisation has

been accompanied by growing inequalities among and within nations. Women have been particularly badly hit since most of the world's cheap unskilled labour is female.

Gender and Globalisation

As discussed above, globalisation is a complex process creating risks and opportunities and uneven impact for different groups. Literature on gender and globalisation indicate that globalisation's impact on gender relations has been manifold and complicated. Through globalisation, the state has been weakened and fragmented. The patriarchal assumptions underlying power structures of the nation state have further marginalised women. Additionally, the fragmentation of power has led to the emergence of new social groupings able to present their claims internationally.

Trade liberalisation is an important part of globalisation since it seeks to create fair competition for economies at different levels of development by reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers. We cannot however ignore longstanding imbalances within and between nations, men and women that have translated into uneven patterns of growth and heightened inequality. Women in particular have unequal access to resources and face different constraints from those faced by men. Women may therefore not be able to benefit from trade liberalisation and are more likely to suffer from the adjustment costs of trade reform and economic restructuring.

Empirical research reveals that while women have not been able to utilise growth opportunities resulting from trade liberalisation in countries like Pakistan, they successfully entered the garment industry for export in a country like Bangladesh. Whereas these employment opportunities result in increased income for the women, the work conditions, benefits and rights of workers remain key issues of concern. A study on 'The Effects of the East Asian Crisis on Employment of Men and Women: The Philippine Case' found that during the East Asian crisis, male unemployment got worse than female unemployment because of the bigger decline in the tradable and industrial sectors. Female unemployment increased more slowly than male unemployment since the relatively female-intensive service sector was not hard hit. In short, the crisis created more 'idleness' for men due to unemployment and shorter working hours; and longer work hours for women compared to men.

Three points are worth noting from the above example. First, labour markets are not gender-neutral: markets embody social and cultural norms and practices. Secondly, macroeconomic and trade theories do not recognise important issues concerning the reproductive economy, that is, unpaid work hours in social reproduction and its implications. Lastly, during constrained macro-economic periods, families and households become major de facto safety nets. This is mainly

due to the inability of the state to provide safety nets. Gender neutrality cannot be assumed since it is women who bear the main responsibility of maintaining the household (Lim 2000).

Available literature suggests that African women are being further isolated and disempowered by globalisation and its associated trade and financial policies. Yet, some scholars argue that technological and communications aspects of globalisation have improved women's long standing organisational methods, enhancing their skills and strengths in campaigning and communicating globally. This may not be true for many sub-Saharan African countries where even basic needs are still unmet. Similarly, globalisation process has achieved mixed results in reproductive technology. On the one hand women have a greater choice and freedom with respect to reproduction. However, this has been accompanied by various health problems. Consequently, clearer understanding of gender implications of globalisation and benefits of trade liberalisation is needed as African economies grapple with the twin challenges.

Gender Dimensions of Trade Liberalisation

The most important gender-specific topics relevant to trade agreement and free trade are 'food, water, health and education, access to ownership and control of income and resources' (Williams 2002). The following issues have been identified as important in the discussion of women's roles and concerns about globalisation and the impact of trade liberalisation:

- Women's undervalued and unrecognised labour in social reproduction and how this influences the market.
- Constraints faced by women, which may hinder them from benefiting from trade liberalisation.
- Rules and practices that promote import liberalisation and export promotion and the implications of such agreements on men and women.

In attempting to understand the gender dimensions of trade liberalisation scholars have looked at the issue from two premises:

- Trade liberalisation policy may intensify existing gender inequalities that worsen women's economic and social status. Trade liberalisation brings different costs, benefits and opportunities to men and women, and this gender difference is found across all economic and social categories.
- Existing gender inequalities can also undermine the effectiveness of trade policy thus affecting the implementation of the policy. The impact of trade liberalisation is mediated by gender relations and gendered social, economic and political structures.

Gender and trade have a two-way relationship. While trade has gender impacts, gender biases and inequalities can also influence trade policy outcomes. Due to the different constraints faced by men and women, women's inability to respond appropriately may limit their chances of taking advantage of new opportunities. Similarly, trade liberalisation may exacerbate existing gender inequalities thereby worsening women's economic and social status. For instance:

- Trade liberalisation may even lead to reduction of women's access to and control of resources like land particularly when there is a switch from subsistence to cash crop production for export;
- Trade liberalisation policies leading to increased employment of women without considering complementary measures like day-care will increase work burden of women; and
- Trade liberalisation may reinforce gender segregation and gender-typing of occupations and 'women's jobs' may have lower pay and be less secure than 'men's jobs'.

Despite scanty and inconclusive work on the impact of trade liberalisation on women, a review of the literature indicates that, for some countries, trade liberalisation and export promotion seem to have led to a feminisation of the labour force. It has not stimulated an expansion of female-intensive export-oriented manufacturing industries for most of sub-Saharan Africa countries.

However, the picture is not unilaterally negative. For instance, in some cases, new trans-national (TNC) export industries have provided women with employment at competitive or higher wages than other forms of local employment, giving women a sense of freedom and greater autonomy. Yet, evidence also shows that such production based on cheap female labour, under extremely arduous working conditions, is exploitative and ultimately damaging to women and their families. Preliminary evidence from Kenya and Uganda suggest a trend towards feminisation of horticulture (for French beans and flowers). The interplay between existing gender inequalities and trade policies result in a number of broader areas of gender-differentiated impact of the operation of the trade system: These include the following adopted from Williams (2001):

Trade-Induced Fiscal Adjustment and Gender

- Decreased tax revenues from the liberalisation of imports adversely impact fiscal deficits resulting in cutbacks in government spending on social programs special programs geared towards girls and women.
- Introduction of mechanisms such as privatisation and commercialisation of services, which are necessary correlates of trade liberalisation, often shift the burden of social reproduction to the household sectors.

Trade-Induced Employment Effects and Gender

- Feminisation of the labour market and or the informalisation of work (subcontracting, homework etc).

Destruction of Internal Markets

- Increase imports of products such as vegetable, meat, milk and milk products, which in some countries, are the domains of women.
- Threats to craft and dressmaking from machined produced import substitutes and increase cross border trade in second-hand cloths.

The above analysis clearly indicates that refining the analytical and policy framework of gender and trade is critical. A gender analysis approach to trade policy and trade liberalisation will need to identify key mechanisms through which trade liberalisation impact men and women differently. It will also need to emphasise gender differentiated roles, gender based constraints, women's time allocation, access to and control of resources, impact of increased export expansion, feminisation of jobs versus comparative advantage, rights and working conditions of workers and collection and analysis of gender disaggregated data. Due to the important role of gender relations in influencing the outcome of macro level trade policies, further research focusing on trade and gender will have to critically understand the following issues:

- a. what trade policy is all about,
- b. gender implications of WTO and other agreements,
- c. gender relations in the African context,
- d. trade policy's impact on existing gender realities and vice versa,
- e. other policies affecting trade policies,
- f. directional shifts in trade policy and the implications of such shifts for gender equity,
- g. poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Appropriate trade policy reforms ensuring that women's interests are more fully taken into account at the design stage have to be put in place. The neglect of gender implications of reform process is difficult to justify or sustain if the African continent is to effectively and efficiently address the challenges faced. Moreover, a clearer understanding of gender implications on WTO agreements is a priority.

Gender Implications on WTO Agreements

Agreement on Agriculture (AOA)¹

Agriculture continues to play an important role in sub-Saharan African economies. African women have always been highly represented in farming activities, providing most of the labour force producing food for local consumption and agricultural

commodities for export. Three critical areas of concern emerge from the debate on agricultural liberalisation from a gender perspective: food security, food sovereignty and sustainable livelihood. The issue of food security is closely linked to the loss of domestic agricultural production and its implications for nutrition. The loss of sustainable livelihood is intertwined with import penetration and the loss of preference in the international agricultural markets (Williams 2002).

The reduction of domestic support to agriculture is likely to negatively affect small-scale farmers, particularly women, who have been relying on government infrastructural and storage support for their outputs. Furthermore, privatisation and transformation of land to cash crop or export agriculture has implications on food security and livelihoods. A study² conducted in Kenya on adoption of tea suggested that constraints on female tea labour are an obstacle to adopting tea, improving tea yields, and combining expansion in tea production with expansion in food production. Furthermore, women farmers in male-headed households very often do not directly receive any proceeds from the sale of export crops. The key point to note is that because of their different roles and responsibilities, men and women are likely to respond differently to economic reforms. The response to these changes depends on the rules and norms of market institutions as well as the structure of households and farms. Therefore, gender based distortions which influence market responses to the new incentives cannot be ignored. From both an efficiency and equity perspective, successful policy formulation has to address the specificity of women's contribution and the constraints they face. Both of these can inhibit their supply response in the cash crop sector.

Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS)³

Discussions on the implications of TRIPS agreement on gender have been focused in the following areas among others: public health with emphasis on HIV/AIDS, agriculture and implications on biodiversity, seeds genetic resources, traditional or indigenous knowledge. These in turn have implications for food security, nutrition, livelihoods and technological transfer. Research needs to focus more sharply on the gender implications of TRIPS on agriculture, reproductive health, technological transfer and privatisation and monopolisation and transfer of traditional knowledge in healthcare, medicines and agriculture.

The General Agreement on Trade and Services (GATS)⁴

The liberalisation of the services sector is an area of critical concern since women tend to dominate the services sector particularly health and education sectors. Discussions point towards the impact and access and availability of public services such as health, education, and natural resources such as water and energy. Areas

of concern include: governments ability to regulate the quality of health care, clean water supply, education; stiff competition from high labour supply internationally; employment creation and conditions of work, and wages and income levels for men and women.

Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMS)⁵

TRIMS raise concern about protection of local industries and the extent to which least developed countries are likely to respond to the needs of various foreign investments given their weak infrastructure and industrial base. The key gender concerns raised in the discussion of investment and trade liberalisation include: employment in the export manufacturing, health and working conditions, growth potential of small and medium sized firms. They are also questions around government's ability to regulate foreign investment to spur development, size and scope of foreign investors and governments ability to protect local producers and markets. In particular, it is noted that women are concentrated in small and medium enterprises raising high possibilities of government's abandonment of gender mainstreaming and equity programs or policies in favour of foreign firms. In sum, gender-based biases and constraints need to play an important role in the formulation of trade negotiations and trade policy. More focused research on gender implications of WTO agreements is also required. Furthermore, trade policy should be examined in the context of other macro-level policies in order to act as an instrument for promoting gender equality, eradicating poverty, raising the living standards of people and contributing towards sustainable human and economic development.

Ongoing Work on International Trade and Gender

International organisations such as UNIFEM, UNCTAD and UNRISD, CIDA, IDRC and others have devoted special attention to the analysis of trade policies and how they impact on men and women differently. In particular, UNIFEM has tried to unravel the mysteries of trade-agreements and incorporate a gender perspective to trade policies. UNCTAD has shown commitment by treating gender as a cross-sectional issue while developing important and useful analytical tools to clarify the links between sustainable development and international trade (Evers 2002). UNCTAD has also highlighted the effects of globalisation, especially issues of weakened capacity of national governments to achieve gender equity objectives.

Research organisations in the North and South have also addressed the issue of gender and trade liberalisation. Each year since 1994, CODESRIA organises a Gender Institute, which brings together some 12 to 15 researchers. During the first few years, the institute's main objective was to promote gender awareness. The Institute has subsequently been organised around specific themes to promote the strengthening of gender analysis in African social science research. One of the themes selected for the 2002 Gender Institute is 'Globalisation, Gender and

Trade'. The Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF) based in Tanzania is co-ordinating a research project on 'International Trade and Gender in East Africa'. This research aims to improve the ability of East African governments (Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania) to adopt a gender perspective in their analysis of international trade agenda, both in their negotiations and lobbying within the WTO, and with other trading partners. The research will provide insights into how gender inequalities may be intensified, reduced or newly created in East Africa, as a result of the changing international trade regime and the region's adherence to WTO rules. It analyses the how gendered structures of production and decision-making, and gender bias in access to resources might constrain the expansion of exports and/or reduce the potential benefits of trade liberalisation to the region. Specifically, the objectives of this research are to:

- i) chart the trade policy process and trade policy regime in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda from a gender perspective;
- ii) produce 'Gender Aware Country Economic Reports;
- iii) investigate the following sectors: Fisheries, Floriculture, Garments and Coffee. The first two sectors were comparable across the three countries and one sector coffee in Uganda is not comparable across countries;
- iv) to identify and disseminate policy implications of the research to all existing and potential actors in the trade process in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.

The study uses an analytical macro-meso-micro framework. A unique feature of this research is the integration of a gender perspective into the analysis and its interest in explaining the *actual* mechanics of economic and social transformation brought about by changes in the trade regime.

Despite ongoing work in this area, a lot of work still needs to be done as is spelt out in the next section. There is need to emphasise the value of strengthening the link between research and advocacy. Alliances and networks exploring issues of trade and gender include Women Working Worldwide (WWW), International Gender and Trade Network, Europe (IGTN), North America Gender and Trade Network-US, International Gender and Trade Network Secretariat, Centre of Concern, Gender and Trade Network in Africa (GENTA), Development Alternative with Women for a New Era (DAWN), Informal working group on Gender and Trade (IWGGT), Gender and Economic Reforms in Africa (GERA). These alliances and networks contribute towards electronic discussions and knowledge sharing among members.

Key Challenges

The following four broad areas have been identified as necessary to help us understand and implement policies on trade and gender:

- i) Research
 - ii) Understanding WTO agenda from a gender perspective
 - iii) Capacity building
 - iv) Advocacy
- i) Build a solid knowledge base on the gender impact of trade policies, agreements and bodies by promoting qualitative and quantitative research and studies on:
 - a. what trade policy is all about,
 - b. gender implications of WTO and other agreements,
 - c. gender relations in the African context,
 - d. trade policy's impact on existing gender realities and vice versa,
 - e. other policies affecting trade policies,
 - f. directional shifts in trade policy and the implications of such shifts for gender equity,
 - g. poverty reduction and sustainable development.
 - Research requires a comprehensive framework that
 - i) tracks how the effects in specific sectors percolate through the rest of the market economy and
 - ii) analyses how the effects in the market economy influence and are influenced by behaviour in the unpaid household economy where women are the main workers.
 - Refine the analytical and policy framework of trade and gender and strengthen the tools of analysis for the integration of gender perspective into trade policy.
 - Close collaboration of research institutes, universities and national and international organisations, NGOs, Civil Society and policy makers addressing trade and gender issues.
 - More acceptance and recognition of research work conducted by African scholars on the gender impact of trade policies.
- ii) Understanding two agenda from a gender perspective
 - Need to understand the most important items on the WTO agenda from a gender perspective i.e agreements on Agriculture (AOA), General Agreement in trade and Services (GATS), Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreement (TRIPS), Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMS) and a gender approach to treatment of labour in the global economy.

iii) Capacity building

- There is need to improve the capacity of developing countries to participate more actively in the WTO and benefit from new trade rules and Globalisation in general.
- Build the capacity of researchers on trade and gender to understand all the important agreements relevant to the African sub-continent i.e Cotonou, US Africa Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA)
- Strengthen the capacity of Africa's regional Groupings such as ECOWAS, SADC, COMESA and EAC to integrate and analyse and accept the importance of gender in their work.
- Strengthen the capacity of ACBF funded projects on trade to integrate gender analysis.
- Increased training for researchers and policy makers on globalisation, gender and trade.
- Enhance skills and build capacity of a variety of stakeholders, including NGOs, national women's movements and policy makers to understand the gender implications of trade policies, agreements and bodies.

iv) Advocacy

- Build and strengthen strategic alliances among NGOs, researchers and policy makers.
- Support advocacy efforts for mainstreaming a gender sensitive perspective in trade policies, agreements and bodies.

Notes

- 1 'This agreement allows countries which have been using measures for import restraint and domestic subsidy to retain protection for their agricultural sector during the implementation period while those countries that are not using protective measures are prohibited from doing so' (Gender and Trade Network in Africa, 2001).
- 2 Ongile G. (1999), 'Gender and Agricultural Supply Responses to Structural Adjustment Programmes. A Case Study of Smallholder Tea Producers in Kericho, Kenya' Research Report No 109, Nordic African Institute, Uppsala.
- 3 'This agreement allows the patenting of biological organisms, including parts of animals and plants, altered plants and animals as well as genes and cell-lines. This agreement therefore allows companies to strengthen their monopoly over new agricultural and pharmaceutical products. Under TRIPS the inventor is granted a patent as the sole owner of a new product or technology for a

period of 20 years even in categories like medicine and agricultural products (Gender and Trade Network in Africa, 2001).

- 4 This agreement seeks to provide a set of rules on how countries should trade in activities whose output is not in tangible goods (non-tradable sector) and covers a wide spectrum of services such as telecommunications, tourism, water, electricity, banking, health, education, transportation and professional services). GATS require every government to treat services and service suppliers of other WTO members no less favourable than its own like services and service suppliers' GENTA, 2001. Simply put, this agreement provides a framework for negotiations on liberalisation of the services sector.
- 5 'TRIMS are concerned with the liberalisation of foreign investment conditions. Under the TRIMS Agreement, WTO member states commit themselves to treat foreign enterprises under the same terms and conditions as their domestic enterprises. Member countries also commit themselves to the reduction of all quantitative restrictions on imported goods, including tariffs and non-tariff barriers' (Gender and Trade Network in Africa 2001).

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