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Topic 1: Poverty in a globalizing world at different stages of women’s life cycle

“Globalization, Poverty and Women’s Empowerment”

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*** The views expressed in this paper, which has been reproduced as received, are those of the author and do not necessary represent those of the United Nations.**

Introduction

What is at stake as we contemplate the future of the multilateral system is much more than trade and economics. It involves questions of political and economic security. It is about how relations among countries and peoples are to be structured. It determines whether we foster international solidarity or descend into a spiral of global friction and conflict.

Renato Ruggiero, 1996

This statement made by Ruggiero, the former director-general of the World Trade Organization (WTO), highlights the complex and contradictory nature of economic globalization at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Recent advances in technology, communications and access to information, and the intensification of international flows of goods, services and capital serve to accelerate, broaden, and deepen the processes of economic growth and poverty, albeit unevenly. These changes are re/constituting the socio-political and economic landscapes of high-, middle- and low-wage countries, as well as relations between women and men, and their relations with institutions.

Mainstream analyses of globalization are embedded in a belief in the “free market”, and partially informed by acceptance of the notions of “comparative advantage” and a “level playing field”. These analyses foreclose discussions, and erase the role(s) and relevance, of political and social institutions and power relations in partially shaping and facilitating economic activities at the macro, meso and micro levels, as well as the material realities of women and men living in poverty. Further, mainstream discourse discards the proposal that unevenness in levels of development, coupled with asymmetrical power relations both *within and outside* the national and international economic spheres, constitute situations where countries and individuals do not enter, or participate in, markets on equal terms.¹

Thus, economic globalization is represented as an apolitical universal force, whereby the economic and political institutions through which it is facilitated are

¹ The current debate on labour standards is a case in point.

positioned as seemingly neutral, and gender,² class and race relations, through which it is mediated, are assumed to be without relevance to the functioning of the global marketplace. However, as several feminist theorists have both argued and illuminated, the market (Beneria, 1999a; Joeke and Weston, 1994; Kabeer, 2000; Sen, 1996 and 1994; and Strassmann, 1993) and economic restructuring (Bakker, 1996 and 1994; Beneria and Feldman, 1992; Elson, 1991; and Kabeer and Humphrey, 1991) theories, policies and their applications are informed by asymmetrical power relations and patriarchal values, and infected with specific assumptions about particular regions and countries. Reproductive or caring work is also critical for the maintenance of the economy. Further, the gendered implications of economic liberalization are partially influenced by women's and men's locations within the processes of production and reproduction, and their country's position within the international economic and political orders.

In this paper I will briefly discuss the links between globalization and the gendered dimensions of poverty, and propose several policy recommendations for facilitating the empowerment of women.

Towards a Feminist Analysis of Globalization

The invisibility of domestic structures in any body of knowledge is always disabling to struggles for women's rights, and for equality between men and women.

Diane Elson, 1998

The formation of the multilateral trading regime, the implementation of the Uruguay Round agreements, and the facilitation of economic liberalization more generally, are resulting in a decisive shift in the planning focus of, and role(s) of the state in, developing nations (Bisnath, forthcoming).³ Developing countries are, to varying degrees, more engaged in economic policy-making and planning, particularly within the

² For example, trade theories and policy discourses are cast in gender neutral and aggregate terms such as "producers", "traders" and "consumers".

³ Given its mandate, and according to its former Director General, the "WTO is in a certain sense, a product and a symbol of the globalization process" (Ruggiero, 1998).

framework of bilateral, regional and international trade agreements.⁴ Many have opened their markets to international competition at a pace that is faster than that experienced in increased growth and reductions in poverty levels at the national level.⁵ Through their facilitation of the Uruguay Round agreements,⁶ which are legally binding with strong enforcement capabilities, there is also increasing intervention in domestic policy making. It can be argued that the new trading instruments, particularly through the General Agreement of Trade in Services (GATS) and the Trade Policy Review Mechanism (TPRM), are important vehicles for the promotion and implementation of specific domestic economic and (indirectly) social policies, as well as the regulation and disciplining nation-states.

Further, and at the micro level, “negotiations in such areas as financial services, telecommunications and maritime transport demonstrate that few people around the world will remain untouched by some aspect of the WTO’s activities” (Ruggiero, 1996). The multilateral trading agreements have the potential to, and in some cases are, also re/constituting production and consumption patterns. Within this context, and given both the increasing economic interdependence of nation-states and the widening gap between the rich and poor, it is important to identify the various theories, policies, and actors that inform and influence trade rules and norms. In addition, there is a critical need to examine the scope of the rules, the ways in which they are facilitated, and their effects on women and men. Such analyses have the potential to reveal the ways in which the contributions of women and men to the economy - through productive and caring labour - is erased, as well as the ways in which specific institutions, including the World Trade

⁴ Of the 117 countries that participated in the Uruguay Round, 88 were defined as developing. Currently, approximately four-fifths of the 142 WTO member-states are developing countries. In addition, 22 are officially classified as least developed, and many others are seeking to join.

⁵ Trade liberalization has been promoted under the assumptions that trade will lead to increased productivity, growth and competition, and reduced poverty levels.

⁶ Previously, the GATT regulated trade in goods. Since the Uruguay Round, and with the formation of the World Trade Organization, the new trade arrangements cover trade in goods (GATT), services (GATS), intellectual property rights (TRIPS), and investments (TRIMS). In addition, environmental and development issues are constituted in the regime as trade related.

Organization and economic and social ministries, reinforce, constrain, or expand women's positions in the market and the larger society.⁷

The reality of developing countries membership in the World Trade Organization, coupled with the assumption that trade leads to growth and development, underline a principle development belief and approach of multilateral institutions. They hold the view that development must be partially facilitated through the integration of developing countries into the global economy. This belief ignores several issues that are critical to the processes of economic growth. For example, it fails to take into consideration the fact that a country's initial condition and position within the world economic and political orders influence both its market structure and trade outcomes; and that the history of colonialization, and patriarchy inform the productive, human resources, infrastructure, and reproductive capacities of member states.

In addition, and as recent experiences of many countries in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, and Latin America indicate, there is no necessary relationship between economic liberalization and increased economic growth, development, and reduced poverty levels. As the South-east Asian financial crises have revealed, openness can often exert pressures that can result in deepening poverty and the widening of income and wealth disparities within countries. More importantly, there is no convincing evidence that openness systematically reduces poverty or improves the quality of life for the vast majority of women and men in developing countries. As Rodrick (1999) argues, "in practice, the links between openness and economic growth tend to be weak, and contingent on the presence of complementary policies and institutions".⁸ For him, the "fundamental determinants of economic growth are the accumulation of physical and human capital and technological development."

⁷ Here I have treated the "market" and the "society" as two distinct units, however, I do not wish to imply that the market is separated from, or outside of, "society". I would argue that they are intimately connected and partially constitutive of each other.

⁸ Despite the soundness of his critique, Rodrick's analysis discards other important determinants of economic growth, such as reproductive work and power relations.

Caring for the Economy

It is necessary to recognise the specific functional relationship between production and reproduction.

Antonella Picchio, 1992

A feminist analysis of globalization has to: (i) interrogate the gendered dimensions of those theories, such as comparative advantage, that inform it; (ii) reveal the ways in which economic institutions, processes, and relations are not outside of, or prior to, the political and the social but constitutive of it, and gendered; and (iii) bring into historical visibility women's and men's participation in economic activities – this entails empirical studies, as well as discussions of their role(s) in, and the links between, reproductive and productive work, and the gendered effects of the public/private divide.⁹ Such analyses can result in more complete understandings of the causes of growth, development and poverty, and result in more effective and gender-aware policies aimed at improving the material realities of women and men living in poverty.

The division of the world into the economic and non-economic or public and private spheres has resulted in both the theoretical isolation of the economy from the private or reproductive sphere, and the erasure of the role(s) of the latter in the maintenance of the former. Informed by this omission, classical and neo-classical economists, as well as new trade theorists exclude caring labour¹⁰ from their definitions of productive work. The value of reproductive work is further erased by those economic models that calculate production on the basis of monetarily compensated goods and services, thereby excluding unremunerated caring labour (Elson, 1993). In turn, this erasure has facilitated the formulations of allocative and distributive policies and actions that are gendered, in that they disproportionately favour men, e.g., calculations of social security benefits that are based on paid work. Thus in order to address issues that pertain

⁹ In this paper I focus on points (ii) and (iii).

¹⁰ Folbre (1995) defines caring labour as that which is “undertaken out of affection or a sense of responsibility for other people, with no expectation of immediate pecuniary reward”. She also notes that this type of labour is associated with tasks in which women often specialize, such as caring for a parent.

to the empowerment of women, analyses of linkages and feedbacks between macro policies, such as those influencing labour markets, and meso level institutions such as firms and social service agencies, and the material realities of women and men are necessary.¹¹

For example, it is important to recognize that at the macro and meso levels laws, norms and rules that govern markets and public services are not gender neutral, and that men and women, in part because of their differing entitlements, are positioned differently in their interactions with these institutions.¹² The latter point is critical because feminist models for analyzing the effects of globalization must have the capacity to reveal the ways in which gendered structures of production are linked to gender bias in access to resources, e.g., education. This linkage, depending on the sector in question, may pose opportunities or constraints on the export market at the national level, or result in the marginalisation of specific groups of women and/or men, as a result of job displacement, because of the importation of certain products.

Within this context it is also important to understand markets, not in isolation, but within their political and cultural contexts.¹³ To this end, an engendering of Polanyi's analysis of the market as a social construct enables a partial analytic framing of the multiple and contradictory ways in which gender relations, as well as roles and norms,

¹¹ An engendered macro-meso-micro model enables discussions of the gendered dimensions of economic activities in terms of market structures and the differential access of women and men to goods, services and capital markets. Within the context of labour markets, it facilitates identification and analyses of gendered inequalities in wages, hours worked, and occupational structures.

¹² Though the terms “women” and “men” are used here in a general sense, it is not my intention to erase differences between women that are based on class, race, religion, and sexuality.

¹³ In **The Great Transformation**, Polanyi (1944) analysed the roles of the market in partially constituting economic, political and social relations in 19th century Europe. He formulated a framework for understanding the “self-regulating market”, not as a natural phenomenon, but as a political and economic construct. He argued that the market was represented as both separated from society and self-managing, and perceived as such via the ideological view of economic liberalism. As a result, the different ways in which market forces influenced and informed everyday political and individual decision-making were obscured.

are re/constituted as women formally and/or informally participate in the global economy, or are marginalised from it (Bisnath, forthcoming). For example, the promotion of the tourism industry in the Caribbean is leading to an increase in employment, a need for training, the privatization of public spaces, the trafficking of women, as well as a rise in female and male prostitution. It also enables an understanding of the fact that, and as Sen (1994) argues, “while market expansion in many instances builds on and reinforces pre-existing gender relations, it may also destabilize such relations, and open up new spaces for feminist action”. Consequently, political, cultural, religious and economic institutions, relations, and ideologies,¹⁴ which partially re/constitute and inform market relations, also become critical in analyzing the terms through and on which women, men and nation-states enter and negotiate the global marketplace.

As Smith (1998) notes:

an individual is structurally positioned within hierarchical social, cultural, political and economic systems by forces and institutions that are prior to her will. These structural positions shape the individual’s life chances, for they situate her within the relatively stable networks of power relations that shape the distribution of material resources.

In other words, women’s structural positionings vary depending on their race, class, age and their country’s structural position in the international economic and political orders, and are partially re/constituted through their relations with economic, political and socio-cultural institutions and processes. In addition, women’s choices and ‘preferences’ are informed by their position in society. Thus, uneven development and asymmetrical power relations within global and national markets constitute situations where nation-states and women and men do not enter into, or participate in, the market on equal terms.

For example, within the neo-liberal framework, labour is assumed to be mobile. However, this assumption erases the facts that skilled labour tends to be more mobile

¹⁴ Ideology, as Hall (1980) points out, partially provides coherence to social practices and is implicated in the construction of systems of meanings, concepts, categories and representations. It is a terrain on which relations among groups are formed. Ideology partially structures and informs relations of dominance and subordination.

than unskilled labour, and that citizenship matters; nor does it differentiate between the differences in the ability and cultural acceptability of female and male workers to move from one type of job to another, or to move from one spatial location to another in the pursuit of a job. For example, in several countries women are often discouraged or forbidden from working night shifts, principally to “protect them from harm” and because of “the impropriety of women travelling at night”. This type of *protective* labour legislation has the paradoxical result of *protecting* men’s jobs, and reinforcing violence against women, primarily because it forecloses discussions of men using violence, such as sexual assault, to regulate women’s lives, and maintain their privilege in an insecure labour market.

Thus, a feminist analysis of globalization has to be framed by the ideas that: (i) the market is a gendered, social construction; (ii) production and reproduction are intrinsically linked and re/constituted through relations of power; (iii) women and men often enter and participate in markets on differential terms; and (iv) nation-states have differential levels of development, in addition to being unevenly developed within their national boundaries. Within this context, the ‘non-economic’ relations that partially re/constitute markets also become important in considering the terms through and on which women and men enter, remain, move within, and leave the market, and in analyses of market structures.

Such analyses will provide understandings of where, and some of the ways in which, different groups of women and men are located in the processes of production and consumption, in the re/organization of market structures, and in reproduction. For example, women’s ability to enter markets as employees is often hampered by lower levels of education and skills qualification, often due to structural reasons, and restrictions in mobility due to tradition, religion and/or family responsibilities/demands. In addition, it highlights the need to interrogate the relationships of women and men living in poverty with those institutions that are primarily responsible for both facilitating globalization, including the World Trade Organization, the private sector, and nation-

states, and poverty reduction, such as multilateral, regional and national institutions, and civil society organizations.

Policing for Poverty Reduction and Women's Empowerment

The experience of poverty is both shared and distributed within families. All suffer, but some suffer more than others.

Chamber, 1991

... the term empowerment refers to a range of activities, from individual self-assertion to collective resistance, protest and mobilisation that challenge basic power relations. For individuals and groups where class, caste, ethnicity and gender determine their access to resources and power, their empowerment begins when they not only recognise the systemic forces that oppress them, but act to change existing power relationships.

Sharma (1991-1992), quoted in Batliwala, 1994

Gender-transformative policy can hope to provide women with the enabling resources which will allow them to take greater control of their own lives, to determine what kinds of gender relations they want to live within, and to devise the strategies and alliances to help them get there.

Kabeer, 1994

As I have briefly argued above, to more fully understand the implications of globalization for poverty reduction and women's empowerment, it is important to go beyond an analysis of states and markets to issues that pertain to the macro-meso-micro linkages of economic policies, the roles of reproduction in subsidizing the market economy, and the asymmetrical power relations between nation-states, between the nation-state and women and men, between women and men, and among specific groups of women and men.

Women's empowerment¹⁵ has multiple meanings and is associated with a diversity of strategies. For example, within mainstream development discourse of the 1990s, it was often used by organizations focused on enlarging the choices and productivity levels of individual women, for the most part, in isolation from a feminist agenda; and in the context of a withdrawal of state responsibility for broad-based economic and social support. However, in the 1970s, when the concept was first invoked by women's organizations, it was explicitly used to frame and facilitate the struggle for social justice and women's equality through a transformation of economic,

¹⁵ This discussion of women's empowerment draws from a paper written with Diane Elson – Bisnath and Elson, 2000.

social and political structures at the national and international levels. In addition, it recognized the importance of women's agency and self-transformation.

Thus, the initial theoretical framework through which the original concept of women's empowerment was produced acknowledged inequalities between men and women, situated women's subordination in the family, the community, the market and the state, and emphasized that women experienced oppression differently according to their race, class, colonial history and their country's position in the international economic order. In addition, it maintained that women have to challenge oppressive structures and processes simultaneously, and at multiple levels, thereby creating the space for empowerment to occur at both the individual and collective levels (Sen and Grown, 1987; Antrobus, 1989; and Moser, 1989).

Women's empowerment is assumed to be attainable through different points of departure, including political mobilization, consciousness raising and education. In addition, changes where and when necessary, in laws, civil codes, systems of property rights, and the social and legal institutions that underwrite male control and privilege, are assumed to be essential for the achievement of women's equality. According to Batliwala (1994), empowerment is both a process and a goal. She states that:

... the goals of women's empowerment are to challenge patriarchal ideology (male domination and women's subordination); transform the structures and institutions that reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and social inequality (the family, caste, class, religion, educational processes and institutions, the media, health practices and systems, laws and civil codes, political processes, development models, and government institutions); and enable women to gain access to, and control of, both material and informational resources.

Successful empowerment strategies also require the direct involvement of women in the planning and implementation of projects. The process of empowerment evolves like a spiral, involving changes in consciousness, the identification of target areas for change, and analyses of actions and outcomes, "which leads in turn to higher levels of consciousness and more finely honed and better executed strategies" (Batliwala, 1994). As a result, empowerment cannot be a "top down or one way process", nor can there be a fixed formula for its achievement.

Stromquist (1995), in her article on educational empowerment for women, interprets empowerment as a “socio-political concept that goes beyond formal political participation and consciousness raising”. She argues that a “full definition of empowerment must include cognitive, psychological, political and economic components”. She explains that:

- (i) the *cognitive dimension* refers to women having an understanding of the conditions and causes of their subordination at the micro and macro levels. It involves making choices that may go against cultural expectations and norms;
- (ii) the *economic component* requires that women have access to, and control over, productive resources, thus ensuring some degree of financial autonomy. However, she notes that changes in the economic balance of power do not necessarily alter traditional gender roles or norms;
- (iii) the *political element* entails that women have the capability to analyze, organize and mobilize for social change; and
- (iv) the *psychological dimension* includes the belief that women can act at personal and societal levels to improve their individual realities and the society in which they live.

Stromquist notes that there is general agreement that these components are interrelated.

In her essay on nonformal education as a means to empowerment, Monkman, (1997) adopts the components listed above and argues for the inclusion of a fifth component. She posits that there is a physical element - having control over one’s body and sexuality and the ability to protect oneself against sexual violence - to the empowerment process. However useful for the formulation of empowerment strategies, the sense of discreteness promoted by a compartmentalisation of empowerment into different components has the potential negative effect of encouraging and promoting incomplete understandings of the realities of women’s lives. The result can be the implementation of “empowerment strategies” that fail to engage with the complexities of women’s subordination.

In her study of selected empowerment strategies implemented by specific South Asian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), Batliwala (1994) identifies three approaches to women’s empowerment: (i) integrated development; (ii) economic

development; and (iii) consciousness raising and organising among women. She notes that these are not mutually exclusive categories, but argue that they are useful for distinguishing between the various causes of “women’s powerlessness” and among the different interventions thought to lead to empowerment.

- (i) The *integrated development approach* interprets women’s powerlessness to be a result of their “greater poverty and lower access to health care, education, and survival resources”. Batliwala states that strategies deployed under this approach aim to enhance women’s economic status through the provision of services. This approach improves women’s everyday realities by assisting them in meeting their survival and livelihood needs, i.e., their practical needs.
- (ii) The *economic development approach* situates “women’s economic vulnerability at the centre of their powerlessness”, and assumes that economic empowerment positively impacts various aspects of women’s existence. Its strategies are built around strengthening women’s position as workers through organising and providing them with access to support services. Though this approach improves women’s economic position, she notes that it is unclear that this change necessarily empowers them in other dimensions of their lives.
- (iii) Batliwala argues that the *consciousness-raising and organising empowerment approach* is based on a complex understanding of gender relations and women’s status. This method ascribes women’s powerlessness to the ideology and practice of patriarchy and socio-economic inequality. Strategies focus on organising women to recognise and challenge gender- and class-based discrimination in all aspects of their lives. However, she posits that though successful in enabling women to address their strategic needs, this approach may not be as effective in assisting them to meet their immediate or practical needs.

Batliwala posits that empowerment strategies must intervene at the level of “women’s condition while also transforming their position”, thus simultaneously addressing both practical¹⁶ and strategic needs¹⁷. Such analyses facilitates understandings the empowerment process that goes beyond the distribution of resources.

In this context, gender is essential as a category of analysis in discussions of poverty reduction. The presence of poverty is in part linked to the gendered and unequal access to, and distribution of, resources, a lack of control over productive resources, and

¹⁶ According to Moser (1989), practical gender needs are those that result from women’s everyday realities and are typically a response to an immediate perceived necessity, such as food or health care.

¹⁷ Strategic needs results from women’s subordination to men (Moser, 1989).

limited participation in political and economic institutions. Women, in particular, face institutional obstacles to control land and other productive resources. This structural poverty is exacerbated in many countries by the processes of globalization. The gendered dimensions of poverty may be usefully understood in terms of the differential entitlements, capabilities and rights conferred to women and men.

Poverty is tied to a lack of access to, and control over, productive resources, physical goods and income, which results in individual and/or group deprivation, vulnerability and powerlessness. It has various manifestations, including hunger and malnutrition, ill-health, and limited or no access to education, health care, safe housing and paid work environments. It also includes experiences of economic, political and social discrimination. Poverty, then, is not merely a function of material conditions but is also constitutive through the institutions and ideologies that differently constitute, in part, the material realities of women and men and ascribe different meanings to their lives. This concept is an essential component of analyses of poverty and the design of strategic responses.¹⁸ For example, different interpretations of the meaning of the household will lead to different poverty eradication strategies targeted at the household level. Regarding the household as a site of both tension and cooperation, rather than as a harmonious unit, emphasizes the relational aspects of intra-household power and poverty and suggests gender-aware approaches to strengthening women's positions (Beneria and Bisnath, 1999).

The effects of trade liberalisation and expansion for women, men, gender relations, poverty reduction, and development are contradictory and partially dependent on resource endowments, infrastructure, labour market policies, skills and educational levels, socio-cultural norms, and women's and men's positions in the processes of production and reproduction, and the position of the country in question within the global order. Within this context, national and sectoral case studies may illuminate some of the gendered dimensions of international trade (Fontana, et al., 1998). However, these

¹⁸ Although the causes of poverty may be similar across countries, I argue that analyses of poverty, and poverty reduction policies and programmes, must be spatially and temporally specific in order to best address its gendered dimensions.

results will be limited as it is very difficult to isolate the many variables involved in reconstituting the material realities of women and men.¹⁹

An agenda for eradicating poverty and, in particular, its gendered effects requires the dismantling of the institutions and ideologies that maintain women's subordination and justify inequality in terms of political, social and economic resources (Beneria and Bisnath, 1999). To this end, multilateral institutions can work with governments, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to:

- Promote, through appropriate laws, legislation and public awareness programmes, the removal of legal obstacles and cultural constraints to women's access to and control over productive resources, such as land and credit;
- Encourage the formulation, and implementation, of gender-aware and development focussed macroeconomic policies and programmes, by facilitating the use of appropriate data in the design of policies and programmes. This will entail the support for research on the effects of trade liberalization, development and poverty reduction policies and programmes on women and men.
- Encourage, through appropriate economic and social policies, the balanced distribution of the gains from trade. In addition, the "winners" should be mandated to compensate the "losers" through taxes, employment re-training programmes etc.
- Encourage the formulation, and implementation of, poverty reduction policies and programmes that are gender aware.
- Ensure that the costs of the export economy are not externalized (shifted to the sphere of unpaid work) to facilitate competitiveness;

¹⁹ To date, most of the research has concentrated on employment, income and welfare effects (Joeques and Weston, 1994) on women employed as workers in the formal economy, as well as on the impact of changes in export production, (Cagatay and Berik, 1993; and Pearson and Mitter, 1993), rather than the effects of import displacement.

- Ensure that the implementation of the new trading agreements do not negatively impact prices of basic goods and services, and women's and men's household survival strategies;
- Ensure that gender inequalities are reduced, and not intensified, as a result of globalization;
- Ensure that any loss in tax revenue resulting from economic liberalization will not adversely affect the provision of social services;
- Ensure that social policies are developed and implemented to address the gendered effects of globalization;
- Assist women's groups in monitoring, analysing, and influencing the implementation of economic liberalisation policies on women and men in both the formal and informal sectors; and
- Promote the use of both quantitative and qualitative research methods to analyse the gendered dimensions of relative and absolute poverty and economic liberalisation. To this end it is important to recognise the contributions of unremunerated labour so that it can be accounted for in economic planning and poverty reduction strategies, and emphasise the links between economic production and social reproduction. Research questions can include:

- At the national level, which are the areas of current or potential comparative advantages? Where, and how, are women and men located in these sectors? What actions are necessary in order to stimulate balanced growth?

- What types of sectoral restructuring are required to facilitate the new trade agreements? What are the effects on women and men, including in terms of employment, wages, income, and access to services? Are the wages paid to women increasing in absolute terms or relative to men?

- What is the desirable pace of trade liberalisation in different sectors? What are the adjustment costs, regulatory challenges, and the effects on the attainment of certain social objectives? For example, in the context of the General Agreement on Trade in Services, could *Article I: 3(c)* of the GATS threaten “universal” availability to, and quality of, health and education services?²⁰ Due to lack of resources, governments are outsourcing public services to the private sector, thus these sectors are open to foreign competition. What are the possible gendered implications?
- What are the effects on women and men involved in those sectors that are being promoted for export, or displaced as a result of imports? For example, is export related investment attracted by referring to feminine characteristics? Do the education levels of women hinder or facilitate their participation in the new services industries?
- Are the existing patterns of gendered production further constrained, reinforced, or are women’s and men’s employment opportunities expanding and diversifying? For example, the outsourcing of service sector jobs from developed to developing countries, particularly in the area of information technology, has opened up new opportunities for women in, for example, call centres, data entry, and medical transcription work. However, these jobs are typically low skilled. Does economic liberalization facilitate employment in industries previously closed to women? If not, why not? If yes, in what ways?
- Is the autonomy of the member states eroded? In what ways is this loss of autonomy linked with women’s powerlessness?

²⁰ Article I: 3(c), which deals with the scope and definition of the GATS, states “a service supplied in the exercise of governmental authority” means any service which is supplied neither on a commercial basis, nor in competition with one or more service suppliers” is exempt from the rules.

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