

Globalisation,
Gender Equality,
and State
Modernisation

Noeleen Heyzer

TWN

Third World Network

**GLOBALISATION, GENDER EQUALITY AND
STATE MODERNISATION**

By

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Chapter 1

Introduction

While there is raging debate about the nature and impact of globalisation, there are some essential truths about the way it is transforming life in the 21st century. In an era of globalisation, decisions and actions taken in Geneva, New York, Mexico City, or Bangkok have a dramatic impact on the life chances of people living far away, even in fairly remote rural villages. Globalisation brings opportunities and risks, thus creating winners and losers. There is grave concern that globalisation may concentrate losses among the poorer groups and gains among the richer groups.

Another truth about globalisation is that while its benefits may be unevenly distributed, its costs are borne by all. Concern about the inequities and imbalances that globalisation generates has stimulated intense interest in the international development community about how to make globalisation work for the poor. This is especially so after the Asian financial crisis and the protest by civil society in Seattle over trade negotiations.

Today more than 1.2 billion people live in abject poverty with women forming the majority of the world's poor. A commitment to halve the number of the world's absolute poor by 2015 has been agreed to by key development assistance agencies – including the United Nations, the bilateral donor community, and the Bretton Woods Institutions – as part of the International Development Targets stimulated by the UN conferences of the 1990s. The UN Millennium Declaration provides the essential framework and commitment for ensuring that the whole international system is

focused on systematic poverty reduction, and that the benefits of globalisation are shared by all.

Globalisation, while not a new phenomenon, has unique characteristics defined by technological advances achieved in the past 25 years. The engines of globalisation include the increased mobility of capital and the steadily declining costs of transportation, computing and communications. Globalisation is fuelled, as well, by the dismantling of barriers to trade and investments and the belief that economic growth is the main lever to reduce poverty today.

The proposition that economic growth is key to poverty elimination and well-being has generated widespread debate in the international development community. Proponents see globalisation as providing a new connectivity among economic actors and activities around the world, stimulating accelerated diffusion of technology, skills and new economic opportunities for countries and individuals alike. The essence of the argument is as follows: Economic growth is the best way to overcome poverty. In the context of globalisation, market liberalisation is the best way to achieve growth. Countries that have seized the opportunity offered by more open world markets to increase export and attract investments and capital have made the greatest strides in reducing poverty. Governments could help by investing in education, healthcare and both physical and social infrastructure. This thinking has been very influential. It has not only shaped the World Bank's loan conditions, but also International Monetary Fund's policy advice and many World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreements.

The debates, risks and opportunities generated by the process of globalisation are far more complex than the scenario described in the previous paragraph. The first part of this paper reflects on a few key questions and lessons as a way of examining approaches that developing countries could take towards integration in the world economy to make globalisation really work for the poor and for women. I will then examine the progress of women – particularly

poor women – in the context of globalisation and governments, arguing that the re-shaping of processes to promote gender equality will also promote poverty reduction, democratic governance and the realisation of greater equality and human rights for all.

Chapter 2

Some key questions and lessons

Does economic growth reduce poverty?

In discussing the relationship between economic growth and poverty reduction, the question is whether economic growth necessarily leads to sustained poverty reduction. The answer is yes, with the important caveat that the pattern of growth and economic governance may be more important than simply the rate of growth in affecting a country's ability to deal with poverty and social inclusion. Growth will have a greater chance of reducing poverty if the gap between rich and poor is smaller in the first place, or moving in that direction.

There are a wide range of factors that affect the pattern of economic growth and economic governance. The distributional structures along gender, class and ethnicity affect resource allocations and access to development benefits. The breakdown of social cohesion, the de-linking of social goals from the movement of capital, the lack of transparency and the spread of corruption at both national and international levels are important factors. They erode the ability and accountability of governments and the international community to fight poverty, and promote democratic governance, justice and security for all.

What is the relationship between economic growth and gender equality?

To work out this relationship, we need to examine work and earnings, especially the impact of economic growth on patterns of

employment and wage rates across gender lines. The way economic growth affects these patterns depends on the character of growth itself and the relative share of the fruits of such growth in industry, agriculture, formal /informal sector and services.

Women are usually concentrated in the agricultural sector and in the informal sector where the rate of growth and the potential for growth are relatively low. In the industrial and service sectors, where the rates are much higher, the majority are concentrated in the unskilled or semi-skilled categories, and hence have limited access to the opportunities and benefits of economic development.

Today, investment in women's skills and knowledge are crucial if a country is to benefit from emerging employment and earning opportunities in the globalising economy. The capacity to provide more productive and satisfying work in a competitive labour market, and the just distribution of the benefits of work are crucial to the democratic and open societies that the Latin American region is trying to build. By paying attention to women's economic empowerment, the gains from new opportunities could be multiplied and become more visible to broader segments of people.

The new revolution in information and communication technologies, for example, simultaneously creates new possibilities for economic growth and women's employment, as evidenced in India and China. The internet has reshaped the ways markets operate and production is organised. The danger is that the benefits go mainly to those who are already well placed in terms of their knowledge, skills, and social position, creating differentiation not just between women and men, but among women themselves. There is therefore an urgent need to pay attention to women who are negatively affected or who are marginalised. This involves not just improving their access to education and skills development, but a comprehensive reform of educational opportunities for women and girls that will empower them to take advantage of changing employment trends and emerging opportunities in the international economy. A globalisation process in which women have an equal chance to

benefit from opportunities also requires greater labour market flexibility and mobility for women and a change in the way we value women's work. As long as women are treated in the labour market as "short-term", "casual", "informal" and concentrated in the semi-skilled sectors, there will be a disincentive to invest in women. As long as there is a system of gender stratification and cultural factors continue to limit women's choices and options, the potential of countries to achieve sustained economic growth and prosperity will be hampered. So also will be the ways that governments can respond to the needs of people. In short, where there is gender inequality there is also a dangerous barrier to development and democratic governance.

What is the role of government?

There is a growing interest in encouraging governments to follow a middle path between interventionism and the laissez-faire approach, with a balance between the role of the state and the role of the market. The goal is to forge a partnership between states and markets, rather than the domination of one or the other. This thinking is best reflected in the words of Claire Short, Secretary of State for International Development in the UK: "We need to combine policies that promote a vibrant and strong private sector, generating employment and growing wealth, with effective government systems to regulate the private sector, provide education and healthcare for all and provide justice and security. We need effective states and efficient markets. Countries that want to benefit from globalisation must promote both."

This is a much more enlightened position than the ones promoted earlier by the Bretton Woods Institutions. However, there is still a lot more that governments can do to reduce poverty and gender inequality. Poverty reduction cannot be a piecemeal effort directed on a case-by-case basis at communities, while over and above these communities, processes of dispossession, dislocation and de-skilling

are occurring nationally and internationally without being addressed. What is needed is a profound understanding of the nature of poverty and the realities that people living in poverty are facing.

The poor are not a static population nor is poverty a static phenomenon. There are the “new poor” and the “poorer poor” as much as there are the “new rich” and the “richer rich.” The poor, especially women and girls in poverty, face constant and complex risks. Many are trafficked or forced into drug rings and other criminal networks. They do not have savings, resources, or other options to rely on for protection. While there are some who are permanently poor, many circle in and out of poverty on the swing of risks and fate. They are the most vulnerable when disasters happen, conflicts break out, financial crisis erupts, or environments decline.

Governments can play a stronger role in avoiding or at least minimising these risks and their impact on people who are poor. That means taking action to build up the assets and the social capital of the poor, especially women. This is not just a matter of social safety nets and not just a matter of social protection. It is more a question of looking for systematic or structural change to integrate more completely the concerns of distributive justice, social inclusion and gender equality into the framework of policy.

As an example, to eradicate feminised poverty, governments must go beyond the issue of social protection, or even legislative provisions. Attention must be given to urgent issues on how to integrate a gender perspective into national budgets, into taxation and investment, into financial and credit markets, into export policies and employment generation, into agricultural and land policies. Governments can also remove policy biases that undervalue women’s work while promoting growth in the dynamic economic sectors in which women are concentrated. To reduce ethnic as well as gender discrimination, governments can more systematically involve and include the concerns of their indigenous peoples in decision-making and resource allocations.

In order to make a real and measurable difference in the lives of their citizens in the context of globalisation, states must learn to manage shared interests, beyond state boundaries and in recognition of the changing capacity of all states to govern in isolation. This means that effective states and institutions are those that are using the benefits of globalisation to govern more effectively at the national, regional and international level by promoting learning, partnerships, participation, and democratic governance.

What about market liberalisation?

Evidence shows that countries that liberalise their markets tend to grow faster than those that do not. The Least Developed Countries (LDCs), land-locked countries, and small island states are frequently marginalised. But we need to investigate more deeply if we are serious about poverty reduction and gender equality. While a country may experience growth after liberalisation, the poor - many of whom are women and indigenous people in the country - may not have the resources, the access, the power or the capacity to benefit. Liberalisation may favour big companies which compete for the natural resources (land, water, minerals, forest) on which the poor depend. Typically, after market liberalisation, the agricultural sector is neglected, and most of the poor, especially women, depend on agriculture.

With trade liberalisation a country can control how fast to liberalise its imports but cannot determine by itself how fast its exports grow. This depends on market access to developed countries, on the terms of trade, on commodity prices, on having the necessary infrastructure, human and enterprise capacity. Even among the richer developing countries, the capacity to respond and manage trade liberalisation varies enormously.

The lesson learned is that liberalisation should not be pursued in a big bang manner if it is to succeed. The quality, timing, sequencing

and scope of liberalisation is crucial, as is the extent to which the process is accompanied by factors such as the strengthening of local enterprises and farms, human resources and technological development. In other words, developing countries must have the ability and flexibility to make strategic choices in finance, trade and investment policies, where they can decide on the scope and rate of liberalisation and combine this with building the viability of local firms and farms.

With capital liberalisation there is another hidden cost: volatility and instability. This has been the lesson of recent years. In the 1990 World Bank Report on Poverty, Indonesia was singled out as one of the most successful stories of reducing poverty. But the Asian financial crisis wiped out at least ten years' gains in poverty reduction. The string of liberalisation-related financial crises in Eastern Europe and in Latin America has been one reason why poverty and joblessness has not improved on a world scale. The problem with these crises is not only the effect of driving people down below the poverty line.

Poverty increases rapidly when an economy contracts in a crisis, but then decreases much more slowly when the economy recovers. When the economy gets back to its pre-crisis level, the number of poor does not fall back to the pre-crisis level. In Indonesia, during the crisis, men became unemployed and the workload of women increased, as women take up the role of provider of last resort. Violence along ethnic and gender lines increased, especially during food riots when Chinese shop houses were burned and gang rapes of women took place.

One lesson of the financial crisis in Asia is that private sector debt still demands public sector responses and payments. Liberalisation cannot simply involve opening the country to global trade and finance under any conditions. It also entails the renewed role and empowerment of countries and their citizens to be active subjects in determining their future. Countries and citizens have to become

stronger stakeholders in the globalisation process. Governments need to encourage investments that generate high quality jobs, sustainable production, and economic stability and to screen out investments that make no net contribution to development, especially short-term speculative flows.

Currently, the key decisions on how to respond to the crises are taken by a small group of people at the IMF, described in the New York Times in 1999 as follows: "The Fund's policy prescriptions affect people around the world. It decides whether to bail out Ecuador or let its economy slide. It decides whether Korea should defend its currency in the face of a looming depression by doubling the interest rate. It decides whether to crackdown on insolvent banks,.... Each of these decisions puts different groups- workers, small shop owners, bankers or foreign investors - at risk. Because economists often can provide no clear answers, the managing director has leeway to decide which groups to bailout first or at all".

What is clear is that there are gainers and losers and some of the poorer people have not gained but have in fact suffered severe losses to their economic standing. The speed and scale of liberalisation when imposed on countries not ready or able to cope, can contribute to instability, vulnerability and social dislocation, sometimes at lightning speed. The current challenge for development, in the words of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, is how "to ensure that globalisation becomes a positive force for all the world's people, instead of leaving billions of them in squalor".

The single and most powerful message in the Secretary General's Millennium Report "We the Peoples" is "...Globalisation must mean more than creating bigger markets. The economic sphere cannot be separated from the more complex fabric of social and political life . . . To survive and thrive, a global economy must have a more solid foundation in shared values and institutional practices-it must advance broader and more inclusive social purposes."

Chapter 3

Shaping globalisation to promote the progress of women

Last year, UNIFEM issued a new biennial report, *Progress of the World's Women*, which examines advances toward gender equality from the mid 1980s to the late 1990s. It concentrates on the economic dimensions of gender equality and women's empowerment in the context of globalisation. It assesses women's progress using a variety of indicators and examines the issue of accountability, focusing in particular on government accountability for the gender impact of their policies and programmes, including national budgets, and on corporate accountability for the social impact of their operations. Finally, it explores ways in which globalisation can be re-shaped to promote the progress of poor women. The following are some key findings:

a) The progress of women: Empowerment and economics

The report found that conventional approaches to economic policy leave out much of the work that women do, especially the unpaid care work that women undertake for their families and communities. The report presents a more complete view of how economies work, including unpaid care work in the home, volunteer work, and the often invisible "informal" paid work in small workshops, on the streets, and in sub-contracted home-based work.

Looking at economies through women's experiences produces a different analysis of economic reform. Conventional economic indicators may hide a transfer of real costs (in people's time and

effort) from the public sector, where such costs are monetised and show up in government accounts, to households (the “domestic sector”), where such costs are not monetised and therefore not visible. It is women who bear the real costs. This report suggests the need for a more holistic definition of “efficiency” that directs attention beyond financial costs.

The primacy of financial costs is intensified by globalisation. International trade, investment and migration are not new phenomena; what is new is the accelerating speed and scope of movements of real and financial capital. This acceleration is due to the removal of state controls on trade and investment and to the rapid development of new information and communications technologies.

Women have experienced globalisation in a number of different ways. Globalisation intensifies some of the existing inequalities and insecurities for poor women, but for educated, professional women, it opens up new opportunities. Among the negative consequences of globalisation has been financial crises in several regions in the 1990s. In times of crisis, women are called upon to act as the heroes of everyday life, providing the ultimate social safety net for their families when all other forms of social security have failed. Globalisation creates an environment that allows many women to achieve greater personal autonomy but in an increasingly unequal and risky environment.

b) Commitments to the progress of women: Rights and targets

Governments have made many commitments to the progress of women, expressed internationally through UN human rights instruments, International Labour Organisation Conventions and a series of UN conferences held in the 1990s. Some of these conferences identified specific targets and a timetable for reaching these targets. Looking at these targets from the perspective of the progress of women, the report identifies three key findings:

The prominent target: UN world conferences in Cairo (International Conference on Population and Development, 1994), Copenhagen (World Summit for Social Development, 1995) and Beijing (UN Fourth World Conference on Women, 1995) all agreed on a target of closing the gender gap in primary and secondary education by the year 2005. This has been widely emphasised as the target for progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women.

The missing targets: There are no targets for improving women's economic position or reducing the "feminisation" of poverty.

The forgotten target: The Beijing Platform for Action (PFA) affirmed that women should have at least a 30 per cent share of decision-making positions. But this target is not included in the International Development Targets.

Women's organisations from all over the world pressed governments at Beijing and Copenhagen to address women's economic inequality and poverty, and to change macroeconomic policies that hindered women from enjoying secure and sustainable livelihoods. Running through the commitments that governments made at Beijing and Copenhagen is a paradox: the commitments reflect an expectation that governments are responsible for implementing policies to improve the well-being of women, especially poor women, but they do not effectively address the ways in which market liberalisation and privatisation may undermine the capacity of governments to discharge these responsibilities, especially to poor women. There is a need to re-focus attention on gender equality and macroeconomic policy, in the context of globalisation.

c) Assessing the progress of women: A broader picture

Women's economic progress is also assessed with a focus on women's relative occupancy of decision-making in employment

and women's earnings relative to those of men. Women's share of decision-making positions in the economy has been rising in many countries – but there is still a long way to go before it reaches 30 per cent or more in all countries:

Women's share of positions as employer or self-employed

Women's share of positions as an employer or as a self-employed ("own-account") worker is higher in the 1990s than it was in the 1980s in 58 out of 72 countries for which data was available; women's share of positions as an employer or a self-employed worker was 30 per cent or more in 28 countries in the 1990s; women's share of administrative and managerial employment was higher in the 1990s than it was in the 1980s in 51 out of the 59 countries for which data is available; women's share of administrative and managerial employment was 30 per cent or more in only 16 countries in the 1990s.

The gender gap in earnings

The gender gap in earnings persists but there has been progress in reducing it in some countries: around 1997, women employed in industry and services typically earned 78 per cent of what men in the same sector earned, though in some countries it was as low as 53 per cent and in others as high as 97 per cent; in the 29 countries where data was available to make comparisons over time, the gender gap in earnings in industry and services fell from the 1980s to the 1990s in 22 countries. However, the data reflect mainly the experience of women in full-time "formal" employment in larger workplaces and do not necessarily imply that the gap has narrowed for the majority of women who work in part-time or "informal" employment in small-scale places of work or at home.

d) Accountability to the poorest women: Women demanding action

The progress of the world's women is linked to the ways in which governments raise and spend public money; and the ways in which businesses organise production and sales for profit. Increasingly, women are recognising this and are devising new and innovative ways to monitor progress and track accountability for commitments to gender equality.

Gender budget initiatives

Women's organisations are already active in many countries in monitoring the impact of taxation and expenditures on women and men, and holding governments accountable for their budgets. In early 2000, gender-sensitive budget initiatives were underway in 18 countries in 4 regions, drawing their inspiration from two sources: women's budget statements produced by federal and state governments in Australia; the women's budget initiative organised by NGOs and parliamentarians in South Africa.

The governments of South Africa, Sri Lanka, Barbados, St. Kitts and Nevis and Fiji are piloting tools for gender-sensitive analysis of public expenditure for use by ministries of finance. Projects to build capacity for gender budget initiatives are underway in Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean Island states, among NGOs, parliamentarians, government officials and academic researchers.

Holding corporations to account

Government budgets are shrinking in many countries and business corporations have a growing impact on the lives of women. Women have been in the forefront of campaigns for greater corporate responsibility, developing innovative approaches such as corporate codes of conduct.

Experience suggests that corporate codes of conduct must be simple and easy to use and must: include all core ILO labour standards and state company responsibility in agreements with contractors, subcontractors and suppliers; establish a labour contract; ensure high-quality independent monitoring; involve workers and trade unions in implementation and monitoring; include reproductive rights, protection and sexual harassment clauses.

Complementing the introduction of codes of conduct for existing businesses is the creation of new businesses organised from the outset along ethical lines, such as fair trade organisations and ethical investment funds. The UNIFEM National Committee in Singapore has created an ethical equities fund which is investing in publicly listed companies that support a commitment to the empowerment of women. This has grown in a short space of time to \$20 million and 75 per cent of the investors are women.

e) Future progress for women – reshaping globalisation

Women are organising to enter, challenge and change the operation of financial markets, the use of new technologies and the formulation of economic policy at national and international levels, so that globalisation meets human needs.

Micro-finance

Women have been emphasising that micro-finance institutions need to provide complementary services such as business training and market advice, not merely provide loans. Traditional savings and loan institutions which women themselves set up and control need greater recognition and support. The risks associated with micro-finance need more recognition. There is a need for more, not less, attention to social insurance and social protection, as well as asset-building.

Markets for goods and services

Women are very differently positioned in relation to markets in different parts of the world. In some places, where women are socially excluded from leaving their homes and going to market, the challenge is to find ways for women to participate. Elsewhere, the challenge is to create fair markets in which women have greater bargaining power.

Information and communication technologies (ICTs)

Women are still very much in a minority among internet users, but they are beginning to use the internet in creative ways: e-inclusion, to overcome the constraints of seclusion; e-campaigns, to mobilise on-line for women's human rights and other objectives; e-commerce, to reach new markets; e-consultation, to get women's views made known.

But women still face huge imbalances in the ownership, control and regulation of these new information technologies and want to help shape the emerging regulatory framework.

Transforming economic policy-making and global economic governance

A women's agenda for equitable economic governance includes: improving economic literacy of women's advocacy groups; securing more participation by women in economic policy processes; training policy makers to look at economic issues from a gender perspective and engendering economic analysis; pressing for changes in global economic governance, especially changes in the WTO.

Government and international organisations concerned with economic policy must make complementary changes so that ways of organising the global economy recognise people as providers of

unpaid care for one another and not just as producers of marketable commodities. Only then will the conditions for the progress of all women be secure.

Chapter 4

Conclusion

Finally, it is crucial to recognise the importance of economic leadership of women from developing countries. Many women from these countries have become serious stakeholders in the globalisation process and have been taking initiatives to re-shape globalisation to promote a more people-centred development.

The stakes for women are high. They form the majority of the world's absolute poor and are the shock absorbers of various economic crises, structural adjustment programmes and stabilisation policies. More women from the South are now not only participating in discussion about globalisation, but are changing the terms of the discussion especially in the area of economic analysis and policy-making.

Women are re-shaping the ways that markets operate – transforming financial markets, markets for goods and services and transforming technology to re-shape globalisation, bringing together ideas on gender justice and economic justice. Although governments remain accountable for implementing the policies designed to improve the equality and well being of their people, women are challenging international, regional and national market forces when they undermine the ability of states to implement such policies. They are negotiating for trade agreements to create markets that are pro-women and pro-poor people.

Some of their strategies include: building the capacity of local women's enterprises and businesses to access new and emerging markets; enabling women to participate in international trade fairs

and to bargain collectively for better prices; encouraging e-quality in the use of ICTs and e-commerce; training policy-makers to examine economic and globalisation issues from a gender perspective.

While there are commitments to ensure that international financial institutions' policies integrate social development and gender-equality principles, women want the practices of these key institutions to be monitored so that they are in compliance with UN development targets, especially the halving of absolute poverty and the eradication of feminised poverty.

Re-shaping globalisation to promote the progress of women will not just promote gender equality; it will also promote poverty reduction, human development, and the realisation of human rights. The road ahead is both politically and technically challenging for many developing countries and for women. Global and national policy-makers must share in these challenges and be partners in creating success so that progress for women can be progress for all.

GLOBALISATION, GENDER EQUALITY AND STATE MODERNISATION

This paper provides a forceful analysis on how the current process of economic globalisation effects the lives of women worldwide. The inequities and imbalances that globalisation generates has serious implications for gender equality and women's empowerment, especially in developing countries where women bear the social costs of economic growth and market liberalisation.

This paper argues that the state has an important role to play in addressing the systemic problems of globalisation and in ensuring that women's concerns of distributive justice, social inclusion and gender equality are integrated into the framework of national policy.

In examining gender issues in the context of globalisation, the author delineates the complex relationship between economics and women's empowerment, and asserts that the progress of women can only be realized by refocusing attention on gender equality in macroeconomic policy.

Finally, the paper shows how women worldwide are redefining economics and reshaping globalisation, taking the future into their own hands and creating a world in which women's progress becomes a reality.

NOELEEN HEYZER is the current Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). She is widely recognized for her leadership in the areas of poverty reduction and economic empowerment in the context of globalisation; violence against women and women's human rights; and governance, peace and security. Prior to UNIFEM, Noeleen spent twenty years of her life building women's knowledge, leadership, and networks for change. She has been instrumental in shaping government policies in the Asia-Pacific region to protect women migrant workers and farmers. Noeleen has received several awards for her leadership, including the Global Tolerance Award and the Lifetime Achievement and Excellence Award. She holds a PhD in the social sciences from Cambridge University and has authored several books.

TWN GENDER SERIES

is a series of papers published by Third World Network on gender and development issues from a Third World perspective. It highlights the obstacles that hinder women from enjoying secure and sustainable livelihoods, such as those posed by the process of globalisation. It provides proposals aimed at gender justice and equality, and the empowerment and progress of women.