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## comercio internacional

# **T**he gender dimension of globalisation: A review of the literature with a focus on Latin America and the Caribbean

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## **Abstract**

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This literature review presents an overview of current research and publications around economic globalization and gender, with a specific focus on Latin American and Caribbean countries. The objectives of the survey are to uncover the gender dimension of the process and current trends in women's status and well-being as a result of the various dimensions of economic globalization, especially in developing countries. Specific themes of the review include: globalization as a concept, gendered employment-creating and displacing effects of globalization, gender differentiated effects of labor flexibilization-informalization, the empowerment potential of women's trade-related employment, gendered impacts of the weakening of the State under globalization, modern technologies and women, international migration, the global sex industry and women, among other themes. In addition, this study provides an overall assessment of the state of the art of the research, where gaps in the literature are identified and further directions for research and inquiry are suggested.



# I. Introduction

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## 1. Objectives and organization of the survey

The justification for macro economic policies promoting what is labeled “globalization” is that the policies enhance economic growth and reduce poverty. People that remain unconvinced of the social benefits of the policymaking associated with globalization however, argue that the economic growth and economic costs generated by the process are distributed unevenly between countries and segments in society. The distribution of opportunities and risks are determined by the respective access to resources that enable for an adjustment to new conditions, and so obviously disadvantage the already disadvantaged. It is argued that the social adjustment costs of globalization are of a permanent rather than of a transitory nature, and that the economic growth generated is a function of increased poverty and inequality between and within countries.

The relation between globalization promoting policies, economic growth, inequality and poverty is heavily debated and remains unsettled. One of the central aspects in the debate concerns the possible gendered dimension of the structural changes. The question of concern here is if and how it can be claimed that globalization induced gains and losses are unevenly distributed between the sexes. Are there reasons to believe that the effects of globalization do not spread evenly among males and females and that this has devastating effects on women in developing countries?

Would it be possible to identify a gender bias in the present development model adopted by many Latin American and Caribbean countries, or does it have a neutral impact on both sexes?

The justification for this research concern lies in the present nature of gender relations and its implications for women's status and well being and subsequently for sustainable human development objectives. As women all over the world already suffer the consequences of gender-based discrimination, such as through relative poverty, changes in their status and wellbeing have especially strong determinative effects on the fulfillment of human development objectives. Gender analysis therefore merits extra attention in social impact assessments of economic globalization.

This survey will examine the state of the art of the current research on the impacts of economic globalization on women in developing countries, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). It presents a broad conceptual framework under which the literature, encompassing theoretical and empirical studies, is reviewed. On the basis of this review a regional agenda for future research will be proposed. The objective of the survey is to contribute to the generation of knowledge about the gender dimension of economic globalization, in particular in Latin America and the Caribbean, and thereby to contribute to the efforts of mitigating the negative, and promoting the positive effects of globalization on women.

The paper is structured as follows. This opening chapter contains the introduction and some methodological notes. The second chapter covers the review of the literature as such in five sections. The first section presents the concept of globalization as it appears in the literature. Section two questions if, why and how globalization is argued to have gender asymmetric impacts and elaborates on how women are differently impacted than men in the productive and reproductive spheres of their lives. Section three examines the employment-related effects of global integration from different angles. Section four is concerned with the impact of public policies on women and section five summarizes other gender-related and globalization-related issues. The final chapter draws on all information presented previously to critically evaluate the present state of the research. Strengths, weaknesses and gaps in the literature are presented and reviewed to form the basis for a regional research agenda.

## **2. The selection of the material**

There is rather substantial amount of publications dealing with the gender impact of economic globalization, especially with its employment impacts. However, much of it is in the form of essay or advocacy type of writing. There is less quantity of empirical research that attempts to provide data on the specific effects of global integration on women. Moreover, the literature reduces significantly when the focus is empirical research on LAC countries.

The reference list in the end of this document only represents a part of the material that the survey draws on, i.e. the literature that is explicitly referred to in the document. The full list of entries is found in a separate publication "The Gender Dimension of Economic Globalization in Developing Countries" by the present author and institution. This publication contains an annotated bibliography of the literature that was used for the survey. The studies are classified according to countries and topics covered. The document also includes other pieces of information: i) a list of suggested additional reading, ii) a list of relevant Internet resources, and iii) a resource list of researchers and institutions in the field of gender and globalization.

It is important to mention that the survey also includes references to literature (mostly Internet articles or Bulletins) that were not included in the annotated or additional bibliography, but which illustrate a particular point in the text.



The literature has been selected on the basis of a very broad definition of the concept of economic globalization. It includes literature that explicitly refers to the globalization concept and literature which deals with causal dimensions which normally are attributed to the concept. As practically all the literature on gender and globalization focus on changing patterns of gender relations from the perspective of the female sex, no real choice was possible in this aspect.

The first priority in the selection process was logically given to studies about LAC. As shown in the review, only a few countries are (well) documented. Secondary priority was given to studies of generally oriented character. In addition, priority was given to newly produced material (defined as post-1995).

Due to limitation in time, the literature on the impact of gender relations on globalization, i.e. the feedback effects of gender inequalities on the economic performance of countries, was excluded. Excluded was also the debate on policy action (although the references of both themes were kept in the annotated bibliography). The review is limited to material in English and Spanish. This criteria would seemingly lead to the exclusion of literature in Portuguese on Brazil, but as little material was found on Brazil overall this became less of a problem.

In spite of the fact that the physical access to the literature limited the selection of the material reviewed and that there is a modest coverage of Asian and African studies, the studies that comprised the survey ended up being fairly representative of the empirical and conceptual literature on gender-oriented globalization topics. Approximately 100 empirical and conceptual pieces of work including books, journal articles, chapters or articles in edited books, technical reports, and working papers were selected on the above mentioned criteria. A great part of the material was gathered through Internet searches and through local and international research networks.

Finally, the survey attempted to organize the review of the literature around key themes, as shown in the index. However, a substantial conceptual overlap made it a tricky task to insert the literature content under clear headings. Some repetition was unavoidable.



## **II. Major issues and concepts in the gender-globalisation literature**

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### **1. The globalization concept**

Many authors have tried to cope with a rigorous treatment of “globalization”, and gender-oriented economists and social scientists are no exceptions. Although this survey is limited to the economic side of the process, it is important to mention that globalization is commonly perceived as a multidimensional phenomenon with political and cultural dimensions albeit economic factors play a decisive role.

Globalization is generally understood as resulting in greater economic interdependence among countries through international trade, capital flows and international production. Both technological and institutional factors are stressed. On the one hand globalization has been enabled by new information and communication technologies while on the other hand globalization has been enabled by free trade and finance-promoting public policy, which convert into reality the possibilities opened by technological innovation. The literature is focused on the social impact of free trade policies, the global governance of trade and capital integration.

Free trade policies are in the present state of globalization furthered foremost by: i) the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the adoption of WTO agreements by national governments, and ii) the formation of regional free trade areas such as the North American Free

Trade Area (NAFTA) and the movement for the creation of a Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Regional integration agreements, such as the Common Market of the Southern Cone (Mercosur), the Andean Community, the Central American Common Market or the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) are seen as a response to global competition by national governments, which also acted to speed up the introduction of economic reforms within the member countries.

The literature reveals a differentiation between a broader and a shorter definition of globalization (although the line dividing the two groups of definitions is unclear). The shorter or core definition includes technological innovations, trade and financial liberalization, the internationalization of production through Multinational Corporations (MNC), and regional integration, as factors enabling the process of globalization. Besides those factors, the broader definition more systematically includes; the programs of stabilization and structural adjustment, the withdrawal of the state from economic activities/the process of “marketization” of governance (see Taylor 2000; Blackmore 2000; Peterson 1996). At times, proponents of this broader concept make little distinction between globalization and “global capitalism”/ the neo-liberal paradigm. Globalization is thus not only conceived as mere trade and financial liberalization, but as a political and ideological project, with neo-liberalism as its theoretical framework. For instance, Runyan (1995) takes for granted that the agenda of structural reforms coincides plainly with globalization:

“This is essentially the agenda pursued through structural adjustment programs (SAPS) imposed by the International Monetary Fund on debt-ridden countries of the South since the onset of the debt crisis in the early 1980’s ...The now almost worldwide imposition of this agenda is typically characterized as ‘globalization’...”. (Runyan 1995:105).

Along the same lines, Deere (n.d.) asserts that global integration is the result of the package of structural adjustment policies:

“Globalization is what structural adjustment policies were designed to do, to integrate the world economy in stronger terms than ever before.”<sup>1</sup>

Several researchers avoid using the term “globalization” and discuss the issues in terms of “trade and financial liberalization”, which can be interpreted as the core of the definition. It is moreover common that the authors choose one of the dimensions in the adopted definition of globalization for gender analysis, rather than to discuss the gendered implications of the definition as a whole.

## **2. If, why and how : is there a gender differentiated and discriminatory impact of globalization?**

The bulk of the selected material consist of social assessments of economic globalization with its gender dimensions as its major focus. It is important to mention however, that it would be reductionism to see the feminist literature on globalization as solely dealing with gender issues, as its analysis and criticism spans much further. The literature evaluate the process from a sustainable human development perspective, where gender relations – often from the standpoint of human/women’s rights - is the main theme but not the only dimension discussed. That is, the literature criticizes the present developmental model not only on basis of its gendered outcomes, but also on basis of other injustices that risk being accentuated by the process (The North/South divide, racial dimensions, environmental aspects etc.). As such, the literature represents the feminist ideology, which is a vision of the world which goes beyond the elimination of gender inequalities. The feminist utopia is driven by a different logic than the world of today;

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<sup>1</sup> See Web page (<http://www.womencrossing.org/deere.html>).

characterized by more long term thinking and more altruistic social relations. The literature consequently shows great interest for issues that also do not have implications for the relative status and well-being of women. However, the purpose of this paper is to review the literature in regard to the impacts of globalization on gender relations.

Hence the question of concern is if and how the literature identifies a gender bias in the impacts of globalization.

Most of the authors coincide that globalization has gender differentiated impacts. The majority are also of the opinion that, although those effects are of contradictory nature, overall they seem to be adverse to women in absolute as well as in gender relative terms, owing to women's greater vulnerability to poverty.<sup>2</sup> The discussion refers to the majority of women in the world, i.e. to poor women in the developing world. There are several commonly described cases of the gendered outcomes. Some are more probable than others: i) both sexes are negatively impacted, but women more so; ii) women are negatively impacted while men are not/are positively impacted; iii) women are positively impacted while men are not/less so.

In other words, after the positive impacts have been balanced against the negative impacts in the various dimensions of the globalization process, women's material well-being is generally found to have deteriorated and gender inequality to have increased as a consequence of globalization, thereby intensifying the marginalization of women and the "feminization of poverty".<sup>3</sup> It is argued that it should be impossible for globalization to have a neutral impact on women and men, i.e. be equally positive or negative, when: i) pre-existing conditions are biased against women; ii) policy-making institutions do not conduct policy evaluations and neglect the gendered outcomes of globalization; and iii) growth is dependent upon women's unpaid reproductive work. Gender wage inequality is a precondition for growth in many export-dependent developing countries.

Hence, globalization has gender discriminating effects because of gender-differentiated initial conditions which discriminate against women. As shown, the literature identifies three main reasons for gender-biased effects of globalization. First, there are discriminatory gender ideologies that result in differential roles for women and men in the productive and reproductive spheres. The sexual division of labour disadvantage women in a double sense: first, through their inferior situation in the labour market and, secondly, through their role in the care economy<sup>4</sup> and the reproductive responsibilities ascribed to their gender role. Both positions limit women's access to resources, increase their vulnerability to poverty and subsequently increase the risks associated with globalization. The sexual division of labour causes women to experience the effects of global integration through their double roles: i) through expansionary and contractionary employment effects as paid workers in the monetized economy and, ii) through changes in workload as unpaid reproductive workers in the care economy.

Benería and Lind (1995) argue that trade expansion will have a differentiated impact by gender since it is preceded by labour market segmentation by gender.<sup>5</sup> Baden (1998) argues that since markets are not gender-neutral institutions in themselves, any efforts to liberalize them must have different implications for men and women engaged in these markets.

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<sup>2</sup> "gender differentiated impacts" alternatively "gendered effects" in its strict meaning says nothing about possible effects on gender equality, but is generally understood as changes that in relative terms are negative to the female sex due to pre-existing gender relations. The expressions are used in this sense throughout this paper.

<sup>3</sup> The positive accounts regard the employment creating effects for women of globalization, although some disagree with that this would represent an improvement in the standards of living of women.

<sup>4</sup> The concept refers to the unpaid work, of which much is in the form of caring for others, that women provide for in the domestic sphere.

<sup>5</sup> "Given the predominance of labour market segmentation and segregation in production by gender, it makes sense to assume that trade will have a differential impact by gender" (Benería and Lind, 1995: 1).

“Trade policies have different consequences for women and men because women and men differ in their access to economic resources, their social responsibilities, and in their biological make up. Thus, trade policy impacts on the economic, social, cultural and political welfare of both men and women in particular ways that concern each” (Antropus, Peggy, n.d.).<sup>6</sup>

Second, there is the nature of the global governance, where relevant international policy making institutions neglect the gendered reality described above. The World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) are frequently accused of being gender blind and male biased rather than gender neutral, due to their universal disregard of pre-existing inequalities. Such inequality blind policy making, which does not consider differential access to resources, power and decision making, ends up adversely affecting all vulnerable, poor groups in society including women. Hence, as Williams (n.d.) puts forward:

“Gender equality implications arise because trade liberalization, per se, does not eliminate existing gender inequality in access to resources, power and decision making. Rather trade liberalization may build on or exacerbate the negative conditions already affecting women’s lives”.<sup>7</sup>

Third, there is the argument that the reproductive/care economy is even more crucial for economic growth under the structural changes of globalization than probably ever before. The care economy is needed to buffer the negative social effects during economic crisis and the social effects of strengthened deflationary demands. Moreover, in regard to the productive economy, low wages play a functional role in international competitiveness. Gender wage discrimination is therefore argued to be an important ingredient in the economic success of many developing countries under globalization. This functional role further explains the persistence of inequality between men and women. The literature identifies a clear relation between growth and gender inequality in open economies under globalization. It is shown that although growth seems compatible with gender equality in education and health (partly because it would produce better workers), growth is not compatible with gender equality in wages. The relation between the wage gap and economic growth under globalization thus reveals a “win-lose”, “lose-win” scenario, where improved gender wage equality proves incompatible with growth in a globalize world (while the relation between growth and investment in women’s education and health on the contrary displays a “win-win”, “lose-lose” scenario) (Grown et al 2000). This hypothesis is supported by several theoretical and empirical studies. Seguino (2000), for example, argues that the gender wage gap in Asia is an important explanation for the region’s economic growth through foreign investment.

Through a theoretical gender analysis of multinational investment, Braunstein (2000) similarly concludes that a decline in gender wage discrimination in an open economy in the context of high capital mobility leads to capital flight and subsequent decreased employment and output. However, increased wage equality in a more closed economy could have positive effects on output and employment as equality improves resource allocation. David (1996) observes that wage differentials are especially marked in countries that invest in female and labour intensive export production. It is also observed that exporting sectors tend to show higher wage gaps than other sectors. Joekes (1997) concludes that gender relations and gender wage discrimination have been driving forces in the evolution of the international economy.

The above presented body of literature has been criticized for being too pessimistic. Black and Brainerd (1999) claim that increased economic liberalization (globalization) and stiffened

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<sup>6</sup> Antropus, Peggy, *Women’s Perspective*, DAWN (Development Alternatives of Women for a New Era). See Web page: <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title/era-cn.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Williams, Mariana, *Gender, Trade Policy and the WTO*. See Web page: <http://www.model-wto.org/create/meetings/referate/woman.shtml>.

competition will reduce all kinds of discrimination, including gender discrimination, as business no longer can afford the inefficiency and cost associated with discrimination. Nevertheless, Elson (1999) cautions against such positive assertions. She discusses the relation between efficiency and gender equality and concludes that the economic rationality of the "common good" in reducing gender inequalities (macro-efficiency) is subordinated to the economic rationality of households, enterprises, and male comfort etc. (micro-efficiency). Accordingly, one should not underestimate the power of the rationale of micro-efficiency to secure continuous profitable (gender) inequality:

“Thus discrimination against women in the labour market may persist even though it is not economically efficient, in the sense of maximizing profits and output, because it is an effective way of empowering men socially and politically” (Elson, 1999: 629).

Gender is, however, just one of many other determinants of the social impact of globalization. Therefore it can be concluded that as women constitute a heterogeneous group, different groups of women will experience the structural changes differently. Some will win, others will lose and some will hardly be affected by globalization, so leading to polarizing outcomes between different groups of women. The differential social impacts of globalization and the balance between risks and opportunities depends, besides the gender specific context, on factors such as: social class, race, family status, education, age, the country's insertion in the world market and its ability to adapt to global restructuring in its various forms. Sen (1996:826), for example, considers the gender dimension of regional integration and concludes that its impacts are likely to be complex, positive and negative depending on whether there is a resulting capital inflow or outflow, and involving women in both member and nonmember countries.

Thus, the argument is that women in developing countries are at greater risk of a deterioration in their well-being than their counterparts in industrialized countries. Firstly, developing countries' have difficulties in adapting to and benefiting from the new conditions of global trade due to unfair trade rules and associated structural adjustment policies. Secondly there is a relatively strong gender discriminating culture which often takes on even stronger expressions in periods of limited resources.<sup>8</sup>

In the case of Latin America and the Caribbean, the process of insertion in the world economy has been highly heterogeneous. Radcliffe (1999) groups the countries as 'early reformers' (Mexico, Chile and Bolivia), reformers of the 'third wave' (Peru, Colombia and Argentina), 'nonreforming' countries (such as the Dominican Republic) and 'latereformers' (such as Ecuador), but points out that there also is significant variety within these groups. Countries that are in different stages of the process of liberalization cope differently with regional and other free trade agreements. These findings suggest that women in LAC experience globalization in multiple ways (Arriagada 2000).

### **3. Employment effects and the productive sphere**

The literature deals mostly with gains and losses both in the quantity and quality of women's productive work as the result of the process of global integration. Most of the studies analyze employment creating effects, especially in the manufacturing sector, and its implications for women's well being.

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<sup>8</sup> Wage discrimination is estimated to be one third higher in developing countries than in developed countries, (Joekes 1999).

## **a. Trade related job openings in industry, services and agriculture**

The growth in trade related female employment in developing countries is best analyzed in the context of women's recent massive entry into paid labour. The increased number of female wage workers and the "masculinisation of labour"<sup>9</sup> have been attributed both to supply and demand factors that are obviously interconnected.

Strongest on the supply side is the explanation of the "added worker effect", where women compensate for increased male unemployment or for male migration. There is also the interrelated explanation of a "distress sale of women's labour" following economic adjustment and increased poverty. Increased educational levels among women and decreased fertility rates are also considered highly determinant supply factors.<sup>10</sup>

On the demand side the expansion of the service industry, which is claimed both to help further and to be furthered by globalization, has shown to be important for the inclusion of women in paid labour, mostly in low quality jobs, which is especially the case in the Latin America and the Caribbean region (Arriagada 2000).

Here focus is given to the explanatory importance of increased demand for female labour especially in export production. The concept of "the feminization of flexible labour" proposed by Standing in 1989 captures both the quantity and the quality aspect of this gendered employment feature of globalization. The quantity aspect refers to the expansion in the last decades of women's participation in the paid labour force. The quality aspect refers to labour market processes of flexibilization and informalization, where all work becomes more similar to the unstable, low paid type of work typically associated with women's work (i.e. part time work, seasonal work and homework).

The literature so argues for a connection between export oriented industrialization and increases in demand for female labour in light manufacturing ( for example in garments, textile, shoes, and electronics, both in exporting processing zones (EPZs) and non-EPZs), but increasingly also in export oriented services and agriculture. The causal relation has been confirmed and updated by various researchers and in several developing country contexts.<sup>11</sup>

EPZS now exist in fifty countries, with a concentration in Central America and Asia (David 1996). The Caribbean, Mexico, Colombia and Brazil are other important sites for EPZ production in Latin America and the Caribbean. In 1999, one third of the labour force in the manufacturing sector in developing countries was female, and almost one-half in some Asian countries (Mehra 1999:540). Moreover, women account for 2/3 of all workers in the clothing industry (Delahanty 1999:4).

There are several estimations on the proportion of female to male labour in the EPZS at aggregate level. They range from 60% to 80% of the global EPZ workforce.<sup>12</sup> In Honduras women constituted around 75% of the maquila labour force (ILO 2000: 82 ). The country is counting on attracting more foreign investment and women's participation in total labour force, that was equivalent to 30% in 1997, is expected to double by the year 2007 as a result (Thijs 1997). Alvarenga (2001:8) notes that female maquila employment in El Salvador has grown at rates 100% greater than the growth rates in the rest of the manufacturing sector. The association made between trade expansion and the rise in female industrial work is considered so strong that some researchers

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<sup>9</sup> The concept of "masculinization of labour" refers to women leaving unpaid family work to enter the masculine world of paid work. (Elson 1999).

<sup>10</sup> For analysis of the supply (and demand) side see: Cagatay and Ozler 1995; Mehra 1999; Standing 1999. For studies on Latin America and the Caribbean see Cerrutti 2000, Diercksens 2000, Chant 1996, Alarcon-Gonzalez and McKinley 1999.

<sup>11</sup> See Lim 1980, Standing 1989 and 1999, Woods 1991, Kabeer 1995.

<sup>12</sup> See Dar and Save-Soderbergh 1997; Mehra 1999 and David 1996.



speak of a “female-led”, just as well as an export-led industrialization process (for example Joeques 1995).

The explanation given to women’s increased share of the industrial labour force confirms the predictions by mainstream trade theory that trade liberalization is employment creating for countries which have comparative advantage in labour costs. Countries with expensive labour started to subcontract the labour intensive production to developing countries as a means of surviving and thriving on a global market. This “New International Division of Labour”, proved especially beneficial for the access of women to the labour market since they provided the cheapest labour (at least among adults). Some authors call attention to the transformation of women workers into the chief maintainers of the comparative advantage of many developing countries (Delahanty 1999).

In this way it is pointed out that women’s disadvantaged position in the labour market, in terms of wage discrimination and labour segmentation, paradoxically became an advantage in the access to jobs (Fontana, et al. 1998). According to Fernández (2000) employment in labour intense export production is determined by poverty, particularly women’s poverty.

The increased demand for female labour in export production has also frequently been attributed to what is perceived as typical female labour characteristics such as nimble fingers, docility and low propensity to unionize.

In sum female labour is argued to be in increasing demand, especially by multinational corporations and other enterprises producing for export or facing intensified competition, as it provides the low-cost and flexible labour necessary for business survival in a global market.

However, not all female labour is in equal demand. Special preference has been shown for young, educated women without family responsibilities (Joeques 1999). Fussell’s (2000) study on maquila workers in Tijuana, Mexico revealed that the demographic and social characteristics of the female labour force were undergoing great changes. The multinational corporations are also employing older, married, uneducated women, and female household heads. It is concluded that enterprises, in their quest for increased flexibility, have learned to further take advantage of women’s labour market disadvantages and their income needs. The changing characteristics of Mexican workers is also confirmed by other authors who discussed interrelated potential causes for those changes such as for example that the old type of maquila labour is depleted because/and the younger workers prefer other sectors (Nisonoff, n.d.).<sup>13</sup>

As mentioned before, feminization of labour is also observed in the services sector and in export agriculture. In regard to services, the evidence, although limited<sup>14</sup>, suggest that the same factors that affect demand for labour in manufacturing apply to new trade-related services (information processing, business services, financial services). There are hopes that the modern service sector will compensate for predicted loss in employment and job quality in the manufacturing industry (see below section e).<sup>15</sup> Job creation in modern services is, however, not only seen to depend on low labour costs but also very much on educational levels and often also on English skills. It might therefore prove to benefit only women in middle-income countries and so exclude the poorest and least educated women (Fontana, et al. 1998:50) (Mitter 1995).

Overall however, women in general and especially in LAC, are considered to have good chances to benefit from this trade expansion, considering the already strong presence of women in the service sector and considering the gendered orientation of education (the employment creating effects of the expansion of the service sector risk being outbalanced by displacement effects of

<sup>13</sup> Nisonoff, Laurie (year) *Men, Women, and the Global Assembly Line*. See Web page: <http://www.womencrossing.org/nisonoff.html>).

<sup>14</sup> It is difficult to separate internationally traded services from traditional commercial services or social sector personal services.

<sup>15</sup> See Joeques 1999 and Fontana et al. 1998.

technological progress however) (Joeques (1995). The preference for female labour in export manufacturing is shown to have replicated especially well in the Caribbean, where information processing (data entry, software programming) in Jamaica<sup>16</sup> and Barbados has a 100 % female workforce (Joeques 1999). Tourism is another important absorber of female labour in the service sector. In LAC 35 % of the labour force in tourism is estimated to be female (ILO as cited by Falth 1999). However, the amount of working women in tourism might be less than what would be expected when considering women's suitable working experience as care givers in the domestic sphere (Fontana, et al. 1998:50).

Women are seemingly also the preferred labour force in non-traditional agricultural exports, especially in horticulture (flowers and luxury fruit and vegetables). This is largely explained by such perceived female characteristics as nimble fingers and care in handling delicate products. Horticulture crops are found to be especially well-established in Latin America where 90% of workers are women (Joeques 1999). Examples of non-traditional agricultural exports are kiwi and table grapes from Chile, flowers from Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador, México, and vegetables from Mexico, Costa Rica and Guatemala.<sup>17</sup> Jamaica is an other Latin American country which has been especially successful in developing new horticultural products (Fontana, et al. 1998:30). A study on the Chilean fruit sector by Barrientos (1997) has shown that out of 250 000 - 500 000 temporary workers in agriculture, female labour form about half of the total.

## **b. The empowerment potential of trade-related employment**

As was already discussed, women entered the labour market in the context of labour flexibilization and a general deterioration in the employment quality (working conditions and wages). Therefore, it is not surprising that poor quality type of jobs account for much of the growth in formal work for women. Obviously the nature of women's insertion in the labour market determines the empowerment potential of this change. First follows a review of the quality of the new work and thereafter a review of subsequent changes in women's status and well-being.

The quality of women's work in the export industries in Latin America and the Caribbean and in other regions is well documented, especially in the maquilas in the manufacturing sector.<sup>18</sup> Recent studies have provided fresh evidence on women's working conditions in different countries.<sup>19</sup> In general the wages are insufficient to cover living expenses. Women have to cope with wage discrimination (even when they are better educated than their male counterparts), harsh working conditions, sexual harassment, suppression of rights to collective bargaining and bad labour-management relations.<sup>20</sup> Besides poor pay and working conditions, employment in export production is characterized by high job insecurity following high capital mobility and easy relocation of labour intensive segments of production by foreign enterprises. Through the relocation of production, labour costs are kept low and poor women in one country end up competing against poor women in other developing countries in a "race to the bottom" in wages. Moreno Fontes (1997) calls attention to an increase in the "foot-looseness" of business and job insecurity for Mexican female industrial labour following regional integration (see below section e).

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<sup>16</sup> Jamaica has an EPZ for services called "Digiport".

<sup>17</sup> *Jornaleras, temporeras y bóias frias: el rostro femenino del mercado de trabajo rural en América Latina* Sara María Lara Flores (coord.) Instituto de Investigaciones de las Naciones Unidas para el Desarrollo Social-UNRISD Editorial Nueva Sociedad, Caracas, 1995, 229 pp. ISBN 980-317-088-0

<sup>18</sup> For example: Fernández-Kelly 1997 and Tiano 1990

<sup>19</sup> See Renzi (1997), Fernandez (2000) and Alvarenga Jule (2001) in Central America ; Dominguez (2000) in Mexico, and Safa (1997 and 2001) in the Caribbean.

<sup>20</sup> Thijs (1998) links the bad quality of work conditions in maquilas in Honduras and the low market value of the women's working experience with prostitution among ex-workers.

Some authors argue that the modern service sector offers women jobs with more status and quality than the other exporting sectors. However, the modern service sector is very heterogeneous, and some work is labour intensive whereas other types are characterized by high productivity and technological innovation. Moreover and as mentioned, services also demand higher educational levels. In the case of the tourism sector, it is found that in Jamaica most female work in tourism is unskilled, poorly paid, informal and in extension of women's domestic roles (Falth 1999).<sup>21</sup>

Export agriculture is also a new important source of work for women in developing countries. Although the quality of the jobs offered are considered to have less empowerment potential than export production (poor quality work, unstable, and prone to health hazards especially traditional export-crops<sup>22</sup>), agribusiness is believed to have significant poverty reducing effects considering the high incidence of poverty in rural areas.

Cardero (1999) notes that Mexican women are increasingly replacing male workers in export agriculture, but that this occurs in the context of deteriorating working conditions. The erosion of working standards is also confirmed in Domínguez's (2000) study on Mexican maquilas and agribusiness, where she calls attention to the lack of international solidarity for women in agribusiness in comparison with support given to women in the maquilas. Studies on Chilean women in agribusiness reveal that they are hired as seasonal labour on flexible pay, work chiefly with packing, do not find work during low season and provide the industry with the flexible labour needed to complement the male core labour force under peak seasons (Deere and Leon 1997). In regard to the prospects for improved job security, Barrientos (1997) finds reasons for optimism as multinational corporations are tending to reorient the production to compete in quality rather than in product costs, which creates the potential of rising the market value of women's work experience and so provide women with more regular and stable job offers. Moreover, while it is clear that women in Chilean export agriculture are discriminated against in terms of job security, some findings indicate that they may earn higher wages by working long shifts.<sup>23</sup>

In terms of the prospects of women's labour situation in export production, a report by the International Labour Office (2000) concludes that work conditions in export industries (in terms of wage discrimination, for instance) are dependent on the type of strategy for economic growth a country embarks upon. Basically the report asserts that there are two groups of strategies available for a country with an open economy: the low (labour intensive) and the high (capital intensive) road to development. The latter is suggested to be more supportive to women (although there might be a need to ask what group of women are to benefit from the "high road" and how the distribution of benefits relates to poverty reduction objectives):

“ It is in the countries that are faced with the need for technological change and improved product quality to maintain their international competitiveness that women have the best opportunities for training and obtaining supervisory posts. It is also in these countries that wage levels are generally higher than the average for developing countries and where the TCF industries (footwear/leather/textiles/clothing) have the greatest difficulties in recruiting the skilled labour that they need ” (ILO 2000:72)

In the ILO report, Mexico and Argentina are presented as Latin American examples of countries which have opted for the more women-friendly "high road" growth strategy, whereas many countries in Central America are defined as the opposite (ILO 2000:73). Joeques (1999) however, doubts that women will be able to enjoy improved employment quality under the 'high

<sup>21</sup> See section "Other Gendered Globalization Issues" for the close link between tourism/sex tourism, trafficking in women for sexual purposes, female migration and prostitution

<sup>22</sup> Fontana, et al. 1998 and Medel and Riquelme 1994. Also Rebolledo. See Web page: <http://www.uchile.cl/publicaciones/anales/5/estudios6.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Barrientos (1997), Bee and Vogel (1997) and ECLAC (1997).

road' strategy, as shifts to more capital intensive production and diversification of production have been shown to "defeminize" the labour force through increased preference for male employees. She deems both the 'high and low road' strategies as problematic for the prospects of women's employment; the 'high road' in terms of job quantity and the 'low road' in terms of job quality. On the "low road", where success is determined by labour costs, the "race to the bottom" in wages is augmented by increased liberalization and by the informalization of production (the high road also carries these features, but to less so).

However, while there is a clear agreement on the poor quality of women's trade related employment (as compared to male labour standards), the literature displays less consensus about its empowering potential, i.e. about the actual changes of pre-existing working conditions and its meaning for women's status and well-being. The differing accounts are probably explained by the very case specific nature of the issue but also by the different readings of the concept of "empowerment". The term "empowerment" is just as the term "globalization", subject to multiple interpretations. The ambiguity arises from the various understandings of power embedded in the concept of empowerment, which encompasses concepts such as power to, power over, power with and power within (Oxaal and Baden, 1997). In the context of gender analysis "empowerment" is suggested to correspond to "... women challenging existing power structures which subordinate women" (ibid:6).<sup>24</sup>

Although it was not always possible to grasp the writers' reading of the concept, it was possible to identify at least two common interpretations. The first group looks for objective changes. That is, they demand visible gender relative improvements before they see that women are being empowered (more power over). According to this view, men must give up a rather significant part of their power holding position in the productive and reproductive sphere, either resulting in a decreased gender wage gap, labour segregation or a fairer allocation of domestic work. For the second group, subjective changes form the basic condition for empowerment (more power to and power within). That is, women can be empowered although gender relations remain practically unchallenged. The basic criteria for this type of empowerment is a feeling of increased equality at work and at home and does not necessarily need to relate even to absolute positive changes<sup>25</sup>. From this perspective several studies report that female workers get empowering experiences from the occupational change, regardless of double working days and wage discrimination.<sup>26</sup> Dominguez's (2000) study on women in Mexican maquilas and agribusiness however, informs of a dividing line in age, educational and family status. Quite often, young, single and educated women who are found in the more modern maquilas, regard their jobs as emancipating whereas older, less educated woman, with family responsibilities tend to experience labour exploitation (especially in agribusiness).

What is then being said about absolute and gender relative changes arising from trade related employment? In terms of absolute changes, Joeques (1995) criticizes some EPZ case studies for not contextualizing the work before drawing conclusions about its (bad) quality, i.e. for not asking whether it really is a change for the worse for women. Comparisons should be made with traditional female job alternatives such as unpaid domestic work, informal work, agricultural unpaid work, low pay service work (Joeques 1995) (ECLAC 1997). It has not been possible to draw general conclusions about wages offered to women in EPZs in relation to wages offered outside the zones, as discussed further below.

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<sup>24</sup> Bridge Report No 40. *Gender and empowerment: definitions, approaches and implications for policy*. by Zoë Oxaal and Sally Baden, 1997, 33pp. This work is not included in the bibliographies.

<sup>25</sup> It can however be discussed whether empowerment necessarily demands a positive absolute change. A relative improvement without an absolute improvement might also be considered empowering by some.

<sup>26</sup> See Thijs 1998; Bee 2000; Bee and Vogel 1997; Chant 1996.

It is important to separate between changes in the access to paid employment and changes in the terms of women's insertion in the labour market, when attempting to assess the empowerment potential of labour market changes. Joeques (1995) argues that while trade expansion has provided women with better job alternatives than many of the pre-existing ones (basically because they are paid), it has failed to improve the terms of women's insertion in the paid labour market. Fussell's (2000) study on maquila work in Mexico reinforces this assertion, as she found that maquila employment is an equally bad working alternative for women in comparison with other available types of paid work and that women only opt for it as it provides a relatively stable income. The absolute change for women has then only been positive in so far as it has provided more women with paid work.

In regard to gender relative changes the views are even more divergent. Gender relative changes in the reproductive sphere refers to allocation of reproductive work and consumption patterns. Changes in the productive sphere refers to wage differentials and labour segregation. In regard to the changes at the household level it is known that paid work does not automatically improve gender relations. Instead, increased bargaining power and better allocation of household work and resources is a function of the amount of money the woman earns and of her degree of control over it.

The sparse material available on changes in the reproductive sphere shows that paid work rarely alters gender relations to enable a significant change in household labour allocation, whereby women's work load intensifies through the creation of a double work day (Thijs 1998).<sup>27</sup> However, there are also some indications in the opposite direction. Newman's (2001) study on female labour in the cut flower industry in Ecuador for example, challenges the idea of women's eternal double working day by showing that household labour allocation de facto was affected by women's insertion in the labour market.

Concerning the productive sphere, there is no agreement on how trade expansion, through the inflow of women in export oriented industries, has or will impact on gender wage differentials. On the one hand, it is suggested that trade liberalization and trade expansion have helped decrease gender based wage discrimination in developing countries at a relatively fast rate (although not in proportion with the convergence of male and female educational levels) (Tzannatos 1995). On the other hand, as referred to above, it is argued that wage discrimination is especially marked in countries which invest in female and labour intensive export production (Moreno Fontes 1997; David 1996) and that gender wage gaps are an important ingredient for growth in many developing countries (Seguino 2000).

According to the more optimistic theories, such as trade theory, women's wages should rise through increase in the demand for their labour as developing countries make use of their comparative advantage in labour costs. Moreover, globalization and increased competition should reduce all kind of market imperfections, including gender based discriminatory labour market practices, as discrimination prevents efficient resource allocation (Black and Brainerd 1999). The less optimistic theorists reject the idea of a demand-driven rise in unskilled labour's (women's) relative wages. They argue that such possible positive effects are being offset by export competition and the never ending supply of cheap female labour enabled through high capital mobility and the resultant downward pressure on women's wages. They also consider the documented decline in demand for unskilled (female) labour following skill-biased changes in the production system (Ghiara 1999). Joeques (1997) suggests that there is a dividing line between low income countries with newly emerging export activities and middle income countries with more matured industries. Wage gaps tend to reduce in the former while employers want to attract a supply of female labour, but discrimination increases once the labour supply is secured. According

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<sup>27</sup> Changing consumption patterns in the household are less well studied.

to this theory, a demand driven wage rise would only be valid in the initial phase of export production.

In regard to possible impacts of globalization on the gender based segregation of the labour market, researches generally argue that although globalization has improved women's labour market access, it has done little to reduce the sexual division of paid labour. Women have access to a very limited number of occupations and are concentrated in the low quality range of the service sector and in labour intense manufacturing (Chant upcoming book, Radcliffe 1999).

Elson (1999) cautions against the risk of drawing false conclusions about women's empowerment based on observations of diminishing wage gaps. She questions whether this is a result of "harmonizing up" or "harmonizing down", or in other words whether gender equality has increased because women's situation has improved or because men's situation has worsened. She also critiques the assumption that reduced occupational segregation is a sign of empowerment, cautioning that the data needs to be complemented by analysis of changes in vertical power relations. Along the same lines Standing (1999) warns against premature conclusions about women's empowerment on the basis of changes in labour segregation, as diminished sex-based occupational segregation can derive more from an erosion of the male labour situation than from improvements for women. According to Standing the deterioration in men's labour market position plays a crucial role in explaining such recent changes in the labour market:

While there has been an overall trend towards more flexible, informal forms of labour, women's situation has probably become less informal, while men's has become more so (Standing, 1999:600).

### **c. Trade-related informal work**

Besides having transformed trade and non-trade related formal employment into work with more informal characteristics (part-time, temporary contracts), labour flexibilization has employment creating effects in the informal sector. In this sense, labour flexibilization does not only mean that formal employment standards are eroding through an upsurge of flexible types of employment, but also that production has actually shifted over to the informal sector. Growth of the informal sector can consequently also be attributed to trade expansion.

The rise in informal work is thus not only explained by multiplier effects from growth in the formal sector but more frequently through a process of semi-formalization/informalization of the formal export oriented sector. The rationale for this semi-formalization, i.e. the application of subcontracting arrangement between the formal and the informal sector as a cost cutting strategy, is the fact that cheap formal labour no longer seems to be enough to secure a comparative advantage on a world market. It is common that homeworkers, of which 90% are women, are found in the bottom of these production chains (David 1996:32).

Mehra (1999:541) addresses the trend of increased homework and its implications for the quality of women's work as:

“...(a) trend which appears to be reinforcing the feminization of flexible labour but not in the direction that offers women better employment in the waged sector. Rather the trend is towards the intensification of inflexibility, particularly for female employees”.

Sub-contracted work (particularly homework) is found to have undergone a boom in Asian and LAC labour intensive industry (David 1996:32). Homeworkers make up for a large part of the labour force in export oriented manufacturing (clothing, footwear electronics, leather industries) and also in services, such as in tele-work (Chen 1999). Some argue that the trend of informalization is enforced as EPZS loose their function as a cost cutting strategy in the context of increased

economic liberalization, and therefore shift to sub-contracting arrangement to make the difference. (Dar and Save-Soderbergh 1997:121).

Several regional studies address the trend towards informalization of production.<sup>28</sup> Tomei (2000) provides a comparative overview of homework in five Latin American countries. She finds that homework is associated both with economic growth and recession and suggests, albeit recognizing that statistics are lacking, that homework is acquiring a new impetus as a result of the globalization of the economy. Another regional study informs that Latin American manufacturers in footwear, leather, textiles and clothing industries have made increasing use of home work in order to defend their own industries from Asian imports. It is also reported that the Mexican clothing industry has become fragmented into a complex subcontracting system, that homework is widespread in the footwear sector in Brazil and that women in Panama who, due to increased competition, lost their formal jobs in the clothing industry were subcontracted as informal workers (ILO 2000). Cardero, et al. (1999) conclude that growth in female labour participation in both Mexican export agriculture and export oriented manufacturing largely is found in small informal establishments. David (1996) reports that homework in Mexico is especially common in clothing, shoe and shrimp industries. Chen et al. (1999:606) looks at the existing evidence for the use of homework in various sectors and finds in the case of LAC that female homeworkers in Chile are estimated to account for the production of 60% of women's and children's clothing and 30% of all men's clothing, that female homeworkers in Venezuela account for 45% of all clothing industry workers and that, according to one study, homeworkers account for 30% of all garment workers in Mexico.<sup>29</sup>

There are several value-chain studies, which apply a gender focus when trying to trace the complex global production chains from the bottom of the informal or formal sector to the top of the formal sector. Barndt (1999) examines the tomato commodity chain spreading from Canada to Mexico under NAFTA. The author found that women in both countries are drawn into the tomato related labour force as providers of flexible labour. In Canada, women are found in fast food restaurants on contracts of "negotiated flexibility" and in Mexico, in the agro-industries as seasonal/ part-time labour facing "primitive flexibility".

#### **d. Flexibilization, informalization and job quality**

As shown above, the literature suggests that growth in female labour participation mainly is accounted for by flexible formal work and increasingly by informal precarious work. León (2000) states that in most parts of the region, women's massive entrance into paid labour took place within the context of intensified flexibilization following the debt crisis of the 1980's.<sup>30</sup> Informalization is, however, not only a gender question of job creation. Included is women's relative vulnerability to new management philosophies such as the "Just in Time" and the "Total Quality Control" policies, which are designed to maximize flexibility and which deteriorate working conditions. The LAC literature displays concerns for the risk that regional trade agreements such as MERCOSUR and the proposed FTAA will stiffen competition, intensify the flexibilization process of the labour market and disproportionately affect women workers (Espino 1999;2000: Ulshoefer n.d).

Some gender analysts consider it more appropriate to divide the process of flexibilization into a male and a female dimension. The former refers to flexibilization in a neutral or more positive sense (increased professional freedom, labour mobility), while the latter covers the negative aspects of the process in the form of informalization of employment and deteriorating

<sup>28</sup> An early example: is Benería and Roldán, 1987. *The Crossroads of Class and Gender: Industrial Homework, Subcontracting, and Household Dynamics in Mexico City* by Lourdes Benería and Martha Roldán. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

<sup>29</sup> Many of the studies referred to by Chen et al, consider the labour market situation in the early 1990's.

<sup>30</sup> The crisis is only considered to have aggravated the precarious nature of labour conditions and not to have produced it.

working conditions (Todaro and Yanez 1997; Arriagada 2000). Women's relative vulnerability to trends of flexibilization and informalization is argued to arise from insufficiency of job alternatives in combination with the convenience of flexible labour arrangements for the fulfillment of the responsibilities ascribed to their gender roles.

Díaz's and López's (1999) case study on Chile shows examples of a flexibilization process that has led to increased working hours. The increase in working hours is a response to increased competition which just as other responses has been shown to disadvantage women. They found that labour flexibilization excludes women with family responsibilities from the more positive dimension of this structural change, since these women are unable to provide the type of flexibility demanded for (working over time without forewarnings etc.). Instead women are forced to provide flexibility in ways which do not coincide with their domestic obligations (temporary, part time work and homework). These findings are convergent with the results from another Chilean study with a similar focus (Contreras et al. 2001). It is found that part-time work has decreased for women in absolute terms, which partly is attributed to the previously described response to economic liberalization, but increased in relative terms. That is, part-time work has decreased for both genders, but less so for women, signifying that the female share of this precarious type of work has increased under liberalization.

In this sense the present gender role of women is incompatible with the opportunities offered by flexibilization but very vulnerable to its risks, turning women into pioneers in the new models of labour under globalization. In sum, women are considered more vulnerable to precarious formal and informal work for the following interconnected reasons:

- (1) They are concentrated in labour intensive export-oriented sectors where subcontracting arrangements are more common.
- (2) The number of good jobs is diminishing and women are disadvantaged in the fight for the few good jobs remaining and are increasingly being offered low quality jobs.
- (3) Women's generally marginalized labour market situation and weak bargaining position make it easier for employers to impose flexibilization policies on female workers.

### **e. Displacement effects and defeminization of labour**

The literature also argues that the sexes are affected unevenly by the disruptive effects of trade. Besides concerns raised for high job insecurity in exporting industries, the literature draws attention to the question of the sustainability of recent gains in formal employment, to displacement effects on women's traditional work and livelihoods as well as job loss in times of economic crisis. These job losses become increasingly threatening considering women's limited labour mobility caused by gender segmentation in the labour market, and the resulting difficulties in finding alternative employment (Fontana, et al. 1998). In this sense, it is noted that women's vulnerable situation is not only leading to the feminization of flexible and precarious employment, but also to the feminization of unemployment. Moghadam (1999; 376) concludes that: "The feminization of unemployment, therefore, is as much a characteristic of the global economy as is the feminization of labour"

The gender theories on displacement effects and their underlying causes can be summarized as follows:



- (1) **The shift to capital intensive production** leads to a defeminization of labour as men tend to be chosen in such production. Automation, moreover, hits harder on women due to women's strong presence in labour intensive production.
- (2) **The loss of export markets**, following regional and other free trade agreements, affect women in disproportion owing to their relative concentration in exporting industries and their low positions in these industries, especially as subcontracted workers.
- (3) **Import liberalization**, following regional and other free trade agreements, affects women's traditional work in disproportion to men's as women are over-represented among small/subsistence farmers and micro entrepreneurs in the informal sector, whom are the most vulnerable to increased competition.
- (4) **Capital mobility and enterprise relocation**, following liberalization in trade and finance, hit harder on women as women are concentrated in highly footloose industries.
- (5) Economic crises (aggravated by increased financial volatility) lead to disproportional displacement effects for women, as women are concentrated in public employment and in flexible, vulnerable occupations, and because of discrimination arising from the 'male bread winner stereotype'.<sup>31</sup>
- (6) **Increased wages** (or otherwise satisfying wages due to increased male unemployment) in female intensive production attract men, whereby women are pushed out of employment.
- (7) **Export liberalization in agriculture** leads to the overtaking of female dominated foodcrops by male dominated cashcrops. Besides losing the status derived from their traditional livelihoods, women must work in both fields without being fairly compensated for their input in cashcropping. The marginalization of subsistence farming leads to increased food insecurity, which in turn also has gender asymmetric outcomes.

Let us take a closer look at some of the regional accounts of employment/livelihood displacement (1,2,3,6,7).<sup>32</sup>

Capital intensive production is associated with increased demands on workers' skills and from a gender perspective with the defeminization of labour, especially visible in export oriented manufacturing. Joeke (1995) cautions against short-lived gains for women in export manufacturing as countries opt for the "high-road strategy" for economic growth and diversify their production towards more technologically sophisticated products. Female workers are then replaced by men for the interconnected reasons of not having a suitable education and because of gender discrimination in work application processes and/ or selection for on-the-job training. Pearson (2000) raises special concern for a possible aggravation of the disposable nature of female labour with the rise in automated fabrication in labour (female) intensive production. If the process of globalization then leaves its initial stage and transforms into a high-tech/knowledge based production system, it is feared that the "feminization of labor" will become a feature of past decades.

Several studies indicate that the share of women in EPZs labour force has declined over time (for example Kusago and Tzannatos, 1998). In Mexico, one source reports that:

<sup>31</sup> The stereotype of the male bread winner is based on the widespread idea that men are the main providers in families and women only "contribute" and "support" this functional role of the man through their wage labour. In this context, women are fired first as they are considered less important for family survival.

<sup>32</sup> In regard to the numbers 2 and 3 it must be mentioned that labour segregation can work both in favour and against women, depending on what sector, sub-sector they are concentrated in and how these cope with economic liberalisation. Women's position in the informal and agricultural sector however lowers the odds for positive impacts.

“...17 times as many men were employed in the maquiladora region in 1995 as were employed there in 1975, and while men were about one-fifth of all workers in 1975, they're over 40 percent of all workers now. So the labour force as a whole has grown, but men's share of it has also grown enormously” (Wilson 1998 as quoted by Nisonoff, n.d).<sup>33</sup>

The emergence of “second generation maquilas” in Mexico and the consequent impact on female job losses are also confirmed by the studies by Galhardi (1998) and Cardero, et al. (1999). Moreno Fontes (1997) reports that large shares of female workers now only are found in the maquilas of textiles, garments, leather and metal products, machinery and equipment. Todaro and Yanez (1997) observe a deceleration of female employment growth in Chile between 1991-1995, which is attributed to competition-induced technological advancements following intensified trade. It is argued that although women have more schooling, the orientation of their education generally does not prepare them for a more value-added production system. Safa (2001) observes defeminization of the industrial labour force in the Dominican Republic and considers it a re-assertion of patriarchy and the male breadwinner model at the institutional level.

However, women's diminishing proportion in export production is also ascribed to increased competition between men and women for jobs following male marginalization, where women tend to lose jobs to men as their wages and/or male unemployment increase (Kusago and Tzannatos 1998; Cardero et al. 1999).

In addition the literature considers that regional free trade and other trade agreements have gendered implications. Several plurilateral, as well as sectoral agreements affect women more due to their relative vulnerability to market-share losses. Among those agreements are NAFTA and the FTAA, the WTO Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) (which replaced the Multifibre Arrangement), and the Cotonou Agreement. The latter replaced the Lomé convention of preferential treatment between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries.

Delahanty (1999) discusses regionalization and its implications for women in the garment industry. She argues that regional integration leads to increased specialization, relocation of industry between member states as well as to potential losses for non-member countries and to the use of so called satellite countries.<sup>34</sup> In the case of LAC, the Caribbean countries were particularly affected by the creation of NAFTA by Mexico, the United States and Canada. NAFTA is found to have undermined the Caribbean Basin Initiative (CBI) of trade preferences for Caribbean countries in the United States. Since textile and garment sectors were particularly affected, female workers were also adversely impacted. Jamaica and the Dominican Republic were especially hardly hit (Babb et al. 2001:3). According to one source Jamaica lost 9.000 garment jobs in 1994 (Girvan 1999).

Whitehead (2000) compares various case studies covering the effects of NAFTA on Caribbean countries. The author concludes that the Jamaican economy lost market share to Mexico and that this had gender asymmetric effects since a large proportion of women workers are concentrated in sectors particularly vulnerable to Mexican competition (free-trade zones, especially garment manufacture and agriculture). The impact of NAFTA on men and women in Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados was found to be less dramatic than in other parts of the region as the production of these countries was concentrated in sectors less vulnerable to Mexican competition. The high levels of female education in Trinidad and Tobago are also believed to attract foreign

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.womencrossing.org/nisonoff.html#14> . Nisonoff, Laurie citing Tamar Diana Wilson's article "The Masculinization of the Mexican Maquiladoras" *Review of Radical Political Economics*, (1998).

<sup>34</sup> The use of satellite countries for production is a strategy to maintain competitiveness in regional integration. For example, the Dominican Republic is a satellite country for US production and Morocco fills this function for the EU. Delahanty (1999)

investment in high-tech industry and so balance out possible negative effects. In Barbados, possible market losses are expected to occur in light manufacturing and services industries.

In regard to gender asymmetric effects arising from the phasing out of the Lomé convention, Caribbean women in banana export production have been adversely impacted. It is argued that women, especially from the Windward Islands, have been hurt by trade interests between the United States and the European Union and now face 'competition' from United States-based multinational banana exporting companies like Chiquita (Babb et al. 2001):

"As a result of the banana battle between the U.S. and the EU at the WTO, Caribbean women farmers are being forced to compete with agribusiness corporations in the sale of banana exports and are losing the battle to support themselves and their families".<sup>35</sup>

"Women in the Caribbean are facing the erosion of the social, economic and political gains made since independence as they acknowledge the threats to small island developing states in a globalised marketplace in which the economies of scale place them at a disadvantage in relation to larger-scale enterprises" (Antropus n.d).<sup>36</sup>

Fontana et al. (1998) however remarks that on the whole it is rather unclear how much the ACP countries have benefited from the Lomé convention in the first place, and consequently what they risk to lose. She nevertheless identifies non-traditional export agriculture as an area where the phasing out of the Lomé convention could have negative and gendered outcomes, especially in Jamaica.

Concern is also raised for the potential losses of preferential relationships in global trade after the establishment of the FTAA (Girvan 1999).

The phasing out of the Multi-fibre Arrangement (MFA) and its replacement by the WTO Agreement on Textiles and Clothing (ATC) is, on the aggregate level, believed to benefit most exporting developing countries.<sup>37</sup> Nevertheless, once the textile and garment markets become more competitive, export success will increasingly be a question of scale production. Jamaica is once again identified as a potential loser that risks facing increased competition, especially from Asia (Fontana et al. 1998:30). A further drawback of the removal of the quota system under MFA is that it risks intensify the leveling down in wages. This is not to say that the quota system should be maintained but that compensatory systems should be envisaged.

Frohman and Romaguera (1998) examined the possible gendered impacts of a free trade agreement between Chile and the United States. They concluded that the gender-based segregation of the labour market would give rise to gender asymmetric effects which overall would be negative to women. This, as Chilean women are concentrated in sectors more vulnerable to import liberalization (services, garments and agriculture) and not in sectors that are expected to expand. Also, because traditional gender stereotypes diminish women's labour market mobility and the chance to be absorbed in expanding industries. The negative effects in traditional agriculture are however expected to be balanced out with increased demand for female labour in export production.

Concerning women's vulnerability to cheap imports as subsistence farmers and small and micro entrepreneurs, Joekes (1997) argues that African women have been hardest hit. Africa's vulnerability is mainly attributed to the low productivity of domestic production.<sup>38</sup> One example on

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.genderandtrade.net/Quebec%20dailys.htm>

<sup>36</sup> <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title/era-cn.htm> . Statement by Peggy Antrobus, DAWN (Development Alternatives of Women for a New Era. Caribbean)

<sup>37</sup> As long as developed countries will not replace the quotas with other non-tariff barriers.

<sup>38</sup> She contends however that cheap imports may increase local purchasing power thereby increasing the demand for goods from the informal sector.

these displacement effects regards African women's handicraft production which was disrupted by imports from South East Asia. African research moreover reveals that the liberalisation of services under GATS has caused local female service providers to compete against giant foreign companies even in the sectors of education and health. The WTO agreement on Trade Related Investment Measures (TRIMS) is argued to have similar effects to GATS in the sense that the liberalization of foreign direct investment under TRIMS has caused gender-based displacement effects following women's concentration in small and medium sized enterprises. These businesses cope poorly with increased competition from foreign large scale investors (Genta Research Office 2001).

In regard to similar experiences in Latin American and the Caribbean, Babb et al. (2001) and others suggest that Caribbean dressmakers have been impacted by cheap imports of second hand clothes. It is also suggested however that some informal female workers are gaining from trade liberalization through increased opportunities for cross border trading.

Just as import liberalization is found to have disproportional negative effects on rural women (foremost in Africa), so do African studies indicate that export liberalization in agriculture adversely impacts rural women. In this case the male counterparts are not only *less* disadvantaged but actually benefit from the shift. That is, in an African context the potentially positive effects of export liberalization on women (feminization of labour in agribusiness) are outbalanced by, and less emphasized than, the negative impacts of export liberalization (Joeke 1997). The basic concern is that shifts to export production and the subsequent reduction of land for subsistence farming undermines women's traditional livelihoods and food security. As countries divert their own land use towards "competitive" high-value export production/monoculture and open their markets to cheap imports (thereby weakening their own food producing capacity) men are reported to take over the opportunities created in export production. Women are left to make up for lost food security through subsistence farming on marginal lands, and simultaneously demanded to contribute in male-dominated cashcrop. Export production is then argued to result in a heavier work burden and a loss of status for women.

Chamber (2000) discusses the gendered effects of export agriculture in LAC and argues that expansion of export crop production has displaced women from secure agricultural employment to seasonal work, a shift which also causes a loss in household food security. In other words and on contrary to many other researchers, Chambers views women's entrance into the paid economy as seasonal workers and the subsequent abandonment of traditional livelihoods as a deterioration of their living standards.

#### **4. Public policy and the reproductive sphere**

A gender analysis of the impacts of globalization must take into account the implications for women in market as well as non-market activities.<sup>39</sup> The latter analytic terrain in the literature reveals a strong connection between the changing and weakening role of the State under globalization and increased hardships faced by women as they try to fulfill the reproductive responsibilities ascribed to their gender roles. It is argued that globalization (mostly in the form of financial liberalization) constrains national policy choices and cripples the State's capability to fulfill its welfare providing function. This weakening of the state is considered an especially preoccupying trend as it takes place parallel to the trend of structural changes generating a greater need for welfare. This paradox is seen to lead to a squeeze on the care economy where women are

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<sup>39</sup> The reproductive sphere includes effects on women as reproductive and domestic workers but also effects on women's reproductive and sexual human rights. The latter area is little discussed overall and so also in this review.

the primarily responsible.<sup>40</sup> According to Eisenstein (1996) for example, the process of economic globalization with its neoconservative agenda, demands the elimination of public responsibility which, in turn, produces detrimental effects on women as a result of their assigned gender roles. Taylor (2000) likewise argues that the State is being reorganised to serve market interests – the marketization of the state - and that this erosion of the state capacity to deliver social assistance leads to the marginalization and exclusion of women.

The key issues in the debate on globalization and the reproductive sphere are the gendered effects of: 1) stabilization and structural adjustment programs administered by the IMF and the World Bank; 2) domestic policy responses to economic crisis; 3) revenue implications of trade reform; 4) financial liberalization and state credibility; and 5) liberalization of trade in services through the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS).

The gendered impacts of stabilization and structural adjustment programs are central in the discussion (although not all researchers include these in the concept of globalization). An important component in such macroeconomic policies is the reduction in fiscal debt that in turn leads to cuts in the provision of social services. The total package of structural reforms included the adoption of export oriented production on one hand and privatization, fiscal reform and deregulation of markets on the other hand, in what became known as the Washington Consensus. It is claimed that those reforms have dismantled the public distribution system, with budget allocation important to women. In particular, health and education programs have been especially hit in fiscal reforms. Therefore, macroeconomic reforms have forced women to act as shock absorbers and welfare providers of last resort.

Radcliffe (1999) looks at how the state makes use of gender archetypes to accomplish economic and political goals in the era of globalization, and notes that parallel to the process of a "rollback" of the state, as described above, there is a 'rolling forward' of the state where this suits the export-led model. It is found that the state sometimes chooses to disregard the invisible hand of the market and encourages female employment in labour intensive industries in order to attract investment and enhance national growth, while simultaneously, counting on women to cushion for the negative social effects of macroeconomic policy.

In regard to the volatility of global financial flows and the increased risks for economic crises under globalization, the responses to economic crises are found to be similar to structural adjustment programs in the sense of shifting the cost of adjustment to the unpaid economy.<sup>41</sup> In combination with women's disproportionate share of employment loss during crisis – caused by a gender segmented labour market and discrimination arising from the 'male bread winner bias' - the responses to crisis are argued to lead to a "redomesticating" women.<sup>42</sup> Much of this discussion in the literature is based on the Asian financial crisis.<sup>43</sup>

The same preoccupation is expressed for revenue implications of trade reform. More specifically, concern is raised for possible gendered impacts of reductions in tariffs following trade liberalization, when such reforms are carried out in the absence of alternative revenue enhancing measures. Moreover, for possible lost ability to tax companies in the face of the increasingly "footlooseness" nature of capital (McKay 2000). Elson (2001) refers to the public policy constraints which arise from the competition for and dependence on foreign direct investment and importantly short-term capital, as the "deflationary bias". She argues that the constraints imposed

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<sup>40</sup> However it is sometimes also suggested that trade liberalisation can ease the reproductive responsibilities of women, by introducing new and cheaper products (food and household items). This is however a less significant position in the debate.

<sup>41</sup> <http://womencrossing.org/wiegersma.html>. "When we hear about the IMF saving countries from financial ruin, it is, in fact, a new form of structural adjustment, particularly in East Asia, but also in Brazil and other countries." By Wiegernsma, Nan

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title/wham-cn.htm>. Expression cited from Boontham Sakanond

<sup>43</sup> See Otobe, 1999; Adioetomo et al. 2000; Lim 2000; Aslanbeigui and Summerfield, 2000; Singh and Zammit, 2000.

on public policy making by open capital markets penalize women in their reproductive role for the sake of “State credibility” in financial markets.

The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) is, through the push for privatization of public services, feared to create and reinforce the same gender asymmetrical effects as structural adjustment programs and economic crisis.<sup>44</sup> It is argued that public and private providers of services have distinct priorities where only the former has the ambition to ensure that services such as education, health care and water remain affordable and accessible for all citizens. Moreover, that GATS threatens women in disproportion not only as consumers but also as workers, as women are overrepresented in public employment and as entrepreneurs in small and medium companies. Possible new jobs for women in private services are believed to be of worse quality than the lost jobs in the public sector. Preoccupation is also expressed for possible implications for state intervention for social considerations arising from the unclear definitions of services and trade barriers in the GATS agreement. Affirmative action in hiring procedures for example, is at risk to be banned as impediments to trade<sup>45</sup>.

In regard to the changing role of the State in Latin America and the Caribbean, some researchers express concern that FTAA will intensify the roll-back of the state from public responsibility as a whole and especially through the negotiations on services (IGTN Bulletin, May 2001).

Elson (1999), reflects on the prospects of care in the context of increased paid work for women under the neoliberal development model of globalization. She asks whether increased integration in market activities will make women more individualistic, selfish and less nurturing, i.e. more driven by the rationality of the “economic man”. She fears that gender identities might be changing for the worse, where market behavior is undermining women’s more compassionate rationality.

## **5. Other gendered globalization issues**

### **a. The feminization of migration and the global sex industry**

A central feature of globalization is the increased mobility of people across borders. A feminist perspective of migration reveals that gender roles have limited women’s ability to search for better jobs elsewhere. It is therefore argued that the study of migration must take into account not only the ones that migrate but also the ones who stay behind. Recently, however, the gender focus of migration has shifted from the women left behind to women whom migrate themselves.

Gender analysis of current international labour flows, which largely is based on the Asian experience, reveal that migration is no longer male-dominated, that women now are migrating independently in search of paid work (as opposed to before as wives accompanying their partners), and that international migration is increasingly becoming feminized. A report from the ILO (1996) states that Asian women constitute the fastest growing component of international migrant labour. Women in LAC constituted half of all cross border migrants and 48% of intra-regional migrants in 1990 (Daeren 2000).

International migration is explained both through push and pull factors. On the push side, researchers speak about poverty, which partly is attributed to adjustment costs of trade and financial liberalization. On the pull side it discusses hopes for a better future and a demand in

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<sup>44</sup> <http://www.genderandtrade.net>. “An introduction to the the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) For Gender Advocates”. By Farah Fosse, 2001.

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.foreingpolicy-infocus.org> Gats and Women. Foreign Policy in Focus. Vol.6.No2.2001.by Marceline White.

foreign countries for cheap female labour in the service sector, (basically as domestic workers and in other types of work in extension of women's traditional roles ) and in the entertainment industry (often as prostitutes). In contrast to male migration, female migration is found to be driven chiefly by an urge to help the family rather than as a self enhancing project (Oxfam 1998).

In regard to gender analysis of migration in Latin America and the Caribbean, Wilson (1999) looks at the flows of transnational migrants from Mexico to the United States and identifies links between male migration and restructuring in female intensive clothing industry. It is concluded that it becomes more and more common that women go North for short periods of work. Ho (1999) conducted a gender study on Caribbean transnationalism, which shows that the decision of many Caribbean women to migrate is connected with Caribbean men's practical and emotional difficulties to establish a long term relationship and to provide for a family. It is also reported that female migrants, through the creation of transnational networks and cultivation of kinship ties, play a crucial role in a successful adaptation to new conditions in the host country. Babb et al. (2001) suggest that there is an outflow of (female) nurses and health professional from the Caribbean to the United States.

Great concern is raised in the literature for the vulnerability of migrant women (especially if they are illegal immigrants) to abuse of different kinds. More specifically the debate concerns the close links between female cross-border migration, tourism and the global sex trade, where (sex) tourism is argued to have brought into being the global sex industry of today. Trafficking in women for sexual purposes has in this context become a very lucrative business, third in size after the trans-national illegal trade in arms and drugs. It is believed that the global sex trade constitutes a substantial part of worldwide irregular migration and labour migration (IOM 1996). A report by the IOM (1996) on the trafficking of women from the Dominican Republic ranks the country as the fourth biggest supplier of women for prostitution in foreign countries, following Thailand, Brazil and the Philippines. Sex tourism for the purpose of exploitation of children (where girl-children make up the overwhelming majority) is also reported to be on the rise in the region, especially in the Dominican Republic and Brazil, as increased political attention and improved legal frameworks in Asia have forced child abusers to search for new and 'safer' markets elsewhere (ECPAT 1996).

Hughes (2000) takes a broad look at the links between globalization and commercial-sexual exploitation of women and children, and argues that new technologies, global tourism and globalized crime, have given the sex industry new means of exploiting, marketing and delivering women and children as commodities to male buyers. In regard to the relation between sex industry and the Internet industry it is argued that the Internet industry is heavily dependent on the sex industry, thrives on it and looks to it for innovation. Four million people, mostly women and girls are reported to be trafficked each year. Many become literally enslaved in the sex industry.

## **b. Modern technologies**

The content of this section overlaps considerably with the section on flexibilization-informalization and job quality as well as the section on disruptive employment effects; however, the literature dealing with modern technologies is broad and deserves to be reviewed separately. Although it is not clear to what extent technological advancements can be equalized with "globalization", modern technologies are important instruments for expanding economic integration on a global scale. Technology furthers and is furthered by globalization.

From a gender perspective the basic concern regards women's relative lack of resources and subsequent difficulty in benefiting from opportunities arising from the use of modern technologies. Besides losing out on potential opportunities, women are also argued to experience more of the negative effects of modern technologies than men, which is demonstrated foremost in changes in the quantity and quality of women's work. The literature reveals links between the introduction of

new technologies in production and job loss for women, an intensification in women's work burden and an intensification of stress.<sup>46</sup> Gender analyses of technology evolution commonly conclude that there is a great need for a radical and constant upgrading of female know-how in science and technology. This need becomes yet more acute when considering that developing countries are beginning to lose their comparative advantage in cheap labour through the outgrowth of a capital intensive production system.

Kumar (1995) highlights the interconnection between trade flows and technology diffusion on the one hand and changes in the gender structure of employment on the other. Particularly stressed are the impacts of biotechnology and computer-aides technologies in manufacturing as well as information technology in the service sector. Biotechnology is predicted to have even greater implications for women's well being than computer technology. Bonder (2001).analyzes the Internet from a gender perspective and finds that women have less access to the net, that women use the Internet for different purposes than men (more for consumerism than for business related purposes) and that women Internet users face a strongly sexist, in some aspect misogynist cyberculture. The latter could serve as a disincentive for women to use and learn from the internet.

There is not full consensus in the literature on the benefits and risks of modern technologies for women. Some researchers are of the opinion that the negative sides of technology have been too much emphasized. They underline that modern technologies also have the potential of promoting gender equality in the developing world and hence to benefit women (Mitter and Rowbotham 1995; Zaucher et. al 2000). It is for example argued that information and communication technology (ICT) has created new employment opportunities for women. ICT is also often argued to provide the women's rights movement with crucial tools for effective mobilization and advocacy. Furthermore, drawing from findings of case studies conducted in the manufacturing sector, Tijdens (1999) argues that the field of electronic data processing has not remained as male dominated as many forecasted and that women have not remained computer-illiterate, as a static view of gender relations would predict.

### **c. Intellectual property rights**

An emerging issue in the globalization/gender literature is the possible gendered impact of the WTO agreement on the protection of intellectual property rights (Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights - TRIPS). The concerns are related to: 1) risk of piracy by pharmaceutical companies and others of women's traditional knowledge in biodiversity; 2) that obligations to pay royalties for improved and biogenetic seeds will hit harder on women as they are the original seed keepers and mainly are involved in subsistence farming and small holder commercial farms; 3) that the agreement undermines public health and that the patenting of medicine by private firms will have a especially detrimental effect on women.

Shiva (1995) discusses the effects of TRIPS in plant and human genetic resources for rural women (1,2) and argues that they enable multinational companies to claim patents on products which are the result of centuries of innovation, selection and preservation of biodiversity by farmers in developing countries, especially by women farmers. Women are then robbed of their share of profits made by multinationals and, moreover, risk being prohibited to keep on using their products. The latter is reported to be the case with seeds, where TRIPS deny farmers the right to save seeds from their own produce (especially women as they are the original seed keepers) by making them pay royalties. Shiva concludes that TRIPS militates against people's human rights to

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<sup>46</sup> See Kumar 1995; Choon Sim 1996; Pearson 2000; Marcelle 2000.



food and health by conferring unrestricted monopoly rights to corporations in the vital sectors of health and agriculture, and that TRIPS opens up a slippery slope to the patenting of all life.<sup>47</sup>

In regard to the patenting of medicine and pharmaceuticals under TRIPS, the debate chiefly refers to the patenting of multinational drug companies of AIDS medicine and governmental inability to distribute the cure at subsidized prices. Here, gender analysts have raised concern for possible gendered impacts, firstly for women's relative vulnerability to AIDS in combination with their relative vulnerability to higher prices for AIDS medicine, secondly, for the implications for women as care providers for AIDS victims and, finally, for the threatened access to cure for gender specific illnesses.<sup>48</sup>

#### **d. Environmental damage**

The literature suggests that globalization, as a promoter of excess consumption, aggravates the misuse of the world's natural resources and that women suffer more from the negative consequences of non-sustainable development, as women are more dependent on natural resources for the fulfillment of their gender roles as care givers.

Shiva (1995) looks at the ecological and gendered outcomes of the rapid expansion of shrimp farming for export in India, where women in the surrounding fishing and farming communities suffered in disproportion from the negative effects on the aquaculture. She concludes:

“I would argue that GNP and growth in international trade is becoming increasingly a measure of how real wealth – the wealth of nature and the life sustaining wealth produced by women – is rapidly decreasing. When trade in commodities is treated as the only economic activity, it destroys the potential of nature and women to produce life, goods and services for basic needs” (Shiva, 1995:24).

Twarog's (1999) gender analysis of international trade in primary forest products and its implications for sustainable forest management, reveals that to the extent that international trade contributes to deforestation and forest degradation, rural women are more negatively affected by this consequence of globalization process than men. This as women commonly are the primary collector of fuel wood, animal fodder, water and plant resources. Mehta (1998) similarly argues that the expansion of export-oriented agriculture and the marginalization of land for food production causes environmental damage with gendered outcomes. She stresses that the blame should not fall on the women who are trying to carry on their subsistence farming on infertile land (the gender-poverty-environment nexus), but rather on powerful corporations' misuse of natural resources and its consequences for the survival strategies of small farmers.

<sup>47</sup> “... most plant diversity originates in the Third World, and seeds and plant materials that today are under the control of the industrialized world, were originally taken freely from the farmers to whom they will now be sold back as patented material. As a result, seed companies will reap monopoly profits, while the genius of Third World farmers will go unrewarded and they will be banned from saving and using their own seeds.” (Shiva 1995: 41). UNIFEM similarly states that : “TRIPS favours developed countries with resources to lodge patents and pay royalties. The “haves” and “have-nots” are becoming the “knows” and the “know-nots”. TRIPS will tend to direct the flow of income in the direction of knowledge-owning and technology-exporting countries. To address this situation, resources must be directed to empower communities and women to safeguard their knowledge and to hold intellectual property rights over their own knowledge” <http://www.unifem.undp.org/trade/text/tsa12.htm>

<sup>48</sup> [www.genderandtrade.net](http://www.genderandtrade.net) IGTN Bulletin September 2001



### **III. An overall assessment of the literature**

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What do we know about possible gender differentiated impacts of the various dimensions of economic globalization and about their implications for gender equality? How does the process affect women's status, working conditions, health and well-being, in general and in the particular case of Latin American and the Caribbean?

The review of the literature uncovers the widely held notion that globalization has gender asymmetric impacts, which for the most part are disadvantageous to women. The review also unveils that a substantial part of the gender dimension of globalization has been insufficiently covered empirically, and also in some aspects analytically. This research gap becomes especially evident when trying to evaluate the reading on a regional and country-specific level. Following is a general discussion on the state of the art of the literature and thereafter a discussion with a regional focus.

#### **1. Established and emerging research topics**

Some gender dimensions of globalization are better documented than others. If one adopts the broader definition of globalization, as described in a previous chapter, the gender asymmetric effects of structural adjustment programs stand out as an especially well covered area of globalization. Studies about the impact of structural reforms began in the mid 1980's and pioneered the academic interest for gender-based effects of macroeconomic policies.

Another well-researched area is the internationalization of production and employment-creating effects for women in the manufacturing sector. The focus lies on working conditions and the empowerment potential of this type of employment.

The academic interest for gendered effects of globalization is nevertheless rather recent, practically taking off as late as in 1995 with the formation of the WTO. After this point in time, discussions on other topics started to emerge in the literature, such as on financial liberalization-financial crisis, regional economic integration, flexibilization-informalization, new technologies and management, the impacts of gender relations on macro economic performance, and the gendered impacts of the various WTO agreements.

The focus on women in export (manufacturing) industries is a result of methodological possibilities and impossibilities, rather than a deliberate choice. The expansion of trade-related work in the service and agricultural sectors is less well documented, partly because it is a more recent phenomenon but also because of methodological difficulties. The unstable type of employment in agribusiness somewhat complicates data collection in this sector and in the service sector the challenge lies in separating internationally traded services from other types of services. However, expansion in trade related formal work in export agriculture and modern services has a promising amount of academic attention.

On the other hand, the documentation of employment effects in the informal sector is more complicated. Unfortunately, this is also a sector with a relatively large concentration of women and which is strongly impacted by export and import liberalization and flexibilization processes. The difficulty of conducting research in the informal sector becomes especially disturbing when considering that this is where the negative employment effects of globalization are believed to be most concentrated. This short-coming can also be considered a disregard of the threats and opportunities facing the majority of women in the developing world. The trend towards increasing shares of informal labour in global commodity chains and the sub-contracting of home workers merit extra attention.

It can be generally concluded that the employment creating effects of globalization in the formal sector is better documented than the employment creating effects of globalization in the informal sector, as well as the employment displacing effects in both the formal and informal sector. The implications of labour flexibilization for women's and men's job quality must also be further explored. Considering the lack of consensus about the gendered implications of new technologies, studies should analyze whether women under the ongoing technological transformation have better prospects than commonly perceived.

Finally, there are few studies that take into account possible gendered indirect effects of globalization, i.e. effects which can modify the situation caused by direct effects. The lack of analysis of such gendered net effects most probably derive both from empirical difficulties and from analytical short-comings.

## **2. Does the empirical evidence substantiate the arguments in the literature?**

The disproportionate focus on certain themes of the gender dimension of globalization and the methodological explanations for this unbalance, naturally affect the state of the art of the research. This limitation is however insignificant in comparison to what possible invalid claims would mean for the state of the art of the research.

It should be noted that the material used for this survey represents a selection of the literature which excludes much of the essay and advocacy type of material on the subject, i.e. the material where most premature conclusions from the empirical evidence available tend to be drawn. Explanatory deficiencies are, however, also found in the selected material.

As shown in the review of the general arguments in the debate, all dimensions of economic globalization are found discriminatory towards women, except perhaps its employment creating effects which by some is interpreted as an empowering change for women. Is there then empirical evidence to back up the claims of a differentiated and/or discriminatory impact against women?

The claims of a discriminatory impact of structural adjustment on women have been substantiated by a large amount of both qualitative and quantitative empirical evidence (although it has proved itself difficult to separate between the effects of economic adjustment and preceding economic crisis and in spite of a lack of intra-household analyses). Also the gendered employment creating effects of export (manufacturing) expansion have been relatively well documented (case studies on EPZs, some household level case studies and a few cross-country studies).

In regard to many of the other dimensions of globalization however, their newness as areas of study and difficulties of collecting sex-disaggregated data, explain much of the exploratory and descriptive character of this literature. Although a strong conceptual framework has been developed on these issues, there are only a few hypotheses which are underpinned with sufficient empirical evidence (such as the gendered effects of the Asian financial crisis and some gendered impacts of NAFTA).

Much of the existing material on, for example, the gendered impacts of labour flexibilization and the gendered impacts of certain regional integration, merely outline women's present disadvantageous situation in the labour market and in the private sphere and predict that globalization therefore ought to have a relatively more negative impact on women. In spite of claiming certain causal relations these studies suggest more than they conclude and do not succeed in establishing causal relations between globalization and changes in women's well-being and status. There is consequently a tendency in the literature to make value judgement of globalization which, no matter how logically predictable the gendered outcomes may seem, are not yet supported by sound empirical evidence. Much of the literature of the various gendered dimensions of globalization, is of a too exploratory and descriptive character to allow for the presented general conclusions.

The difficulty of extracting the gender dimension of globalization can be partly explained by the difficulty of claiming anything about globalization at all. To develop explanatory research and to establish causal relations is always difficult in social sciences, and globalization has proven to be an especially challenging field.<sup>49</sup> It is hard to separate out the effects of globalization from other effects. This short-coming is largely explained by the broad definition of the globalization concept. A differentiation can, as previously shown, be made on the reading of "globalization" in the literature. The broader definition increases the challenge of separating the effects of globalization from effects caused by pre-existing structures and from effects caused by other dimensions embedded in the globalization concept. In regard to the latter problem, some literature present blanket explanations of cause and effect where no distinction is made between the impacts of for example regional integration and impacts from adjustment or other trade liberalization. Wherever a

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<sup>49</sup> "Typically, these effects of economic restructuring cannot easily be separated from other economic restructuring induced by ongoing national trends, including economic contraction and restructuring induced by structural adjustment programmes or the uneven economic expansion of growing economies. Furthermore, as discussed above, dynamic tensions (in some cases direct bargaining relationships) exist in the political economy relationship between firm-driven globalisation and state-centred policy formation. How then are we to separate the effects of globalisation of production on women from domestic economic or policy-driven effects that also affect women?" (Keller-Herzog 1996)

separation is methodologically possible, it is preferable that the dimension (most) attributable to a certain impact is singled out in the value judgement of globalization, instead of falsely signaling that all dimensions of the concept alias “globalization” as a whole is to be blamed for certain social problems.

Molyneux (2001)<sup>50</sup> discusses the implications of a broad definition of globalization for the ability of separating the effects of “globalization” from effects deriving from pre-existing structures:

“...so much of the literature lacks grounding in the facts. Part of the problem is that globalization is defined so broadly as to encompass everything to do with modernity that questions of what causes what effects can never be rigorously posed! I think one of the key questions is, if we take certain indicators of well being, such as infant or child mortality or the fertility rate – what is the more important influence on them? Is it ‘globalization’ or is it state policy and expenditure priorities?”

A very broad definition, where globalization is “everything” and therefore “nothing” from an explanatory point of view, enables for the full condemnation of the phenomenon of ‘globalization’(something supposedly new) for problems that also derive from pre-existing structures. It is therefore important to more systematically ask “to what extent” a problem can be attributed to ‘globalization’.<sup>51</sup>

In this context it can also be mentioned that the definition of globalization and the chosen focus of study also have implications for the research findings. That is, the definition decides what causes and effects will be found by setting the field of analysis in terms of time period and theme. In this sense, the existence of differing definitions among the researchers could help explain possible differing views of its perceived benefits and costs for women. Although the definitions adopted in the literature do not vary strikingly, it seems logical that a broader definition (which more systematically includes SAPS, privatization policies etc.) will generate a more negative evaluation of the overall gendered impacts than a thinner definition. This is important to consider when drawing general conclusions about standpoints in the literature. It can then be concluded that the choice of definition of ‘globalization’ can help explain both explanatory weaknesses and opinions in the literature.

### 3. Analytical challenges

Premature conclusions are not only attributable to empirical deficiencies but also to analytical short-comings. Some of the literature lacks a contextual analysis in the sense that women are considered in isolation both from men and from other women. A gender analysis of the impacts of globalization demands exploration of if and why globalization has gender differentiated impacts, how the respective sex is impacted by the globalization process and how gender equality changes as an outcome of such different impacts. If the gender analysis then focuses on women, as is the case in the bulk of available literature, an analysis demands examining how women’s situation has changed as a consequence of global integration in absolute as well as in gender relative terms. In other words, a gender analysis requires that researchers take into account changes in men’s well-being and status as well as women’s.

When changes in women’s material well-being are analyzed in isolation (with the belief for example that a negative absolute change always is a negative relative change) there is a risk that

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<sup>50</sup> The quote is taken from a personal email exchanged between Molyneux and the present author.

<sup>51</sup> Examples abound of texts which assign to globalization structural social problems that predate the current process of economic integration.

downwards harmonizing in male and female wage differentials and labour segregation is interpreted as empowerment. Likewise, negative impacts on women's material well-being do not signify that gender inequality has aggravated if men also have been similarly negatively impacted. In sum, the impact of globalization in absolute (material well-being) and gender relative (gender relations/ equality) terms must not be synchronized, as an absolute improvement is only a relative improvement if all else is equal. Although an absolute change most often results in a similar relative change, this outcome should not be taken as given.

In regard to the second short-coming in contextualization, the researchers do not always study the subject in its full context or in a larger frame of time. This is the case with some of the studies on the working conditions of EPZs, where as previously discussed, no comparison is made with other/previous job alternatives available for the majority of local women.

An other analytical short-coming in the literature concerns impact analysis of labour flexibilization and subsequent value judgements. Is it correct to suggest, as sometimes is done in the literature, that 'globalization' erodes the quality of female work? To the extent that women lose stable jobs and are pushed into flexible formal or informal work, the quality of women's employment obviously deteriorate further with the intensification of flexibilization-informalization. However, it must also be considered that the process of flexibilization-informalization has created an entry for women into paid formal work and thereby probably improved rather than deteriorated many women's labour market situation. The positive employment effect (from unpaid to paid work) is probably more significant in poorer countries than in middle-income economies, where there are more unpaid women workers to begin with, and where income earning opportunities created through trade expansion cause a more dramatic effect.

Such general statements about employment trends for women create confusion and represent an analytic weakness in the literature. A more accurate claim would be that the prospects for the further improvement of the quality of women's paid work are diminishing under globalization. That is, if the gendered employment effects of globalization can be divided into two phases, the first phase of globalization seems to have benefited women as a whole by drawing them into the paid formal labour market. The second and present phase of globalization however, seems less promising, both in terms of employment quality (flexibilization/informalization) and quantity (defeminization of labour in capital intensive production). As a result, women's massive entrance in the labour market risk failing to fulfill the promises of improvements in women's status and well-being that once was associated with their entrance into the formal labour market. As expressed by an participant at a meeting about the intersections between gender, free trade and human rights in Santiago 2001<sup>52</sup>: "We see that we have advanced (speaking about work quantity and quality), but do we see that we can advance further? "

#### **4. Regional coverage and research needs**

The LAC literature largely parallels the state of the art of the overall literature, but not completely. Because of the present state of the regional research and because of regional characteristics, regional research priorities also divert some from the full picture.

Similar to the overall state of the art of the research, the gender asymmetric effects of regionally implemented structural adjustment programs are relatively well documented. Also the feminization of labour in export oriented manufacturing is a rather extensively documented research area, especially in terms of existing working conditions. The research on such employment creation is for obvious reasons concentrated in countries where labour and female intense export

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<sup>52</sup> It was organized by the focal point of IGTN in Santiago Chile.

production is most common such as in Mexico, Central America (foremost Honduras but also El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama, Costa Rica) and in the Caribbean (Dominican Republic, Jamaica).

In regard to trade related work in agriculture and services, the Chilean fruit industry is well covered (in several case studies) and the export service sector in Jamaica has also been given attention .

The trend towards informalization of production processes and the outgrowth of complex subcontracting arrangements in the manufacturing and the service sector has been recognized in several case studies. However, more research is needed to assess the affect of this trend and the role of informal labour, such as home workers, in the production process. Tomei's (2000) comparative overview of home work in selected Latin American countries is informative, but does not manage to confirm a potential rise in homework as a result of globalization.

The employment implications of regional trade blocks (MERCOSUR, NAFTA, and the upcoming FTAA) are documented differently well. The best covered trade block is NAFTA, about which there are cases studies on the effects on both Mexican and Caribbean women in manufacturing and agriculture (few studies separate the effects of NAFTA from other trade liberalization, however). The literature on MERCOSUR is exploratory. An exploratory study also exists on the gendered effects of a possible trade agreement between Chile and the USA. To date there is little work on possible effects of the FTAA.

There is little or no empirical material on how trade liberalization effects women in other than directly trade-related sectors. This is especially lamentable for the service sector, where the majority (about 75%) of women in Latin America and the Caribbean are concentrated. The same is true for the informal sector as previously discussed (note that there also are trade-related segments both within the service and the informal sector) .

Other areas where more work could be done are the regional experience of female cross-border migration, the growing sex industry, the impact of modern technology on different groups of women, gender differentiated impacts of environmental damage, flexibilization-informalization, and the gendered effects of GATS, TRIPS and other WTO agreements.

Contrasting literature on Africa, the LAC literature is in lack of material dealing with the gendered displacement effects of import and especially export liberalization. This issue is however probably intentionally overlooked in favor of other issues, as the issue is of lower priority to the region as a whole (although not necessarily to some specific countries). One of these reasons to this fact is the region's experience of strong female urbanization and subsequent low rates of participation of women in traditional agricultural production. An other reason is that LAC has a stronger comparative advantage in labour surplus than in land (just as Asia and as opposed to the African case). Yet an other reason is the low status of rural women in LAC in comparison with African rural women whom have more status and independence to lose through the shift to cash cropping. As women in LAC never have had a very strong role in agricultural production, the commercialization of agriculture proves less disruptive. (The implications of TRIPS on seed saving can for the same reasons be expected to have less negative impact in LAC than in Africa).

Countries that are relatively well covered in the literature are Mexico, Chile and also Jamaica and the Dominican Republic (note that the respective studies have different foci). However, no comprehensive gender impact analysis have been done on globalization in any country or group of countries (an analysis which takes into account several dimensions of liberalization and their respective effects on women in several sectors and in the reproductive sphere). DAWN Caribbean (responsible for research of the IGTN) however, is planning to conduct a multi-country, multi-



sectoral empirical investigation of trade liberalization and gender in the region if funds are available (Babb et al. 2001).

This review of the regional literature reveals some issues which should be prioritized for future investigation in LAC. Considering, firstly, that the majority of women in the region are concentrated in the service sector, this should be the main area of analysis. Of special interest are potential employment creating effects in modern services and the importance of the closed gender gap in schooling for such employment expansion. More studies are needed on trade related informal work and on import displacing effects of informal and formal workers. Some African and Asian studies could be used as examples for research strategies in LAC and for comparative studies. Considering that LAC has the highest rates of occupational segregation by gender in the world, it is also important to monitor any globalization induced changes of this situation. The empirical dearth of possible gendered impacts of MERCOSUR needs to be addressed. An estimation of potential costs and benefits for women in various countries and sectors following the realization of the FTAA is also needed.

## 5. Concluding remarks

What does globalization have to do with gender? or -Why is gender relevant as a category of analysis in the study of globalization? This is a rather typical kind of question sometimes directed to researchers and advocates in the field of gender analysis of macro economics, which reflects a widespread ignorance of the meaning of gender regimes for the construction and organization of societies. It is also the most important questions to answer properly to. For the already enlightened on the topic the answer seems all too obvious, but to all those unfamiliar or uninterested of the subject however, the relation seems a farfetched invention. Therefore it is important that the research on gender and globalization continues to develop and improve. Theories and concepts must further be enhanced and backed up with sound empirical evidence, so providing clear answers to the need and usefulness of a feminist perspective of economic as well as political and cultural realities.

It is known that sustainable human development not can be accomplished without gender equality, i.e. that gender equality not only is a development objective for equity reasons, but also for poverty eradication and human development reasons. It is also known that gender equality is economically efficient and enhances growth in the long term. The efficiency argument is powerful and important to build on as it could serve to sway those who do not understand the value of gender equality. A national economy perspective should however not replace a women's rights perspective, but rather complement it.

Both sides of the coin must be developed into forming a rigorous research base on the gender dimension of globalization. Such research should in turn constitute the base for a gender sensitive social impact analysis of present globalization promoting policies, and so decide whether the present developmental model can be justified as such. That would be one step on the way towards a reality where there is no longer a need for gender analysis of globalization or of other economic, social and cultural phenomenon.



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**Note of the sources:** The reference list is divided into two major sections which signal whether the entries have been summarized or suggested as additional reading in the publication "The Gender Dimension of Economic Globalization in Developing Countries: An Annotated Bibliography, ECLAC, Division of International Trade and Integration, 2001, by the present author. Thereafter follows a list of Internet pages which content have not been included in either the annotated or additional bibliography.

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