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# Gendered Impacts of Globalization

## *Employment and Social Protection*

*Shahra Razavi, Camila Arza, Elissa Braunstein,  
Sarah Cook and Kristine Goulding*

### **OVERVIEW**

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## Acronyms

<b>CCT</b>	Conditional cash transfer
<b>CGT</b>	Confederación General del Trabajo ( <i>Trade union confederation</i> )
<b>Dfid</b>	UK Department for International Development
<b>ETI</b>	Ethical Trading Initiative
<b>FDI</b>	Foreign direct investment
<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product
<b>ILO</b>	International Labour Office
<b>NGO</b>	Non-governmental organization
<b>NREGP</b>	National Rural Employment Guarantee Programme
<b>NTAE</b>	Non-traditional agricultural export crops
<b>OECD</b>	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>SEWA</b>	Self-Employed Women's Association
<b>SOE</b>	State-owned enterprise
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom
<b>UNIFEM</b>	United Nations Development Fund for Women
<b>UNRISD</b>	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

## **Preface and Acknowledgements**

This paper was commissioned by the UK Department for International Development (Dfid) as an independent piece of research with the aim of feeding into the *2012 World Development Report* on gender equality, and informing Dfid's own programming.

It examines how globalization affects gendered access to employment and social protection, with a particular focus on informal employment, and the implications of these connections for policy and practice. For its evidence base, the paper draws on an extensive body of literature, including some of UNRISD's own commissioned research. In addition, two review papers were specifically commissioned as inputs, one on macroeconomic policies and their implications for gender equality (Braunstein 2012) and the other on the gender implications of pension reform in Latin America (Arza 2012). Two shorter literature reviews, on public employment programmes and on informal workers' organizations, were prepared in-house (Goulding 2011a, 2011b). We are grateful to Megan Gerecke (independent consultant) for bringing together data sources and compiling many of the figures and tables, and to Peroline Ainsworth (independent consultant) for her work on the overview.

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## **Executive Summary**

### ***Introduction***

The last three decades have seen remarkable changes in economic structures and policies both within and across countries, loosely captured by the term globalization. This paper reviews evidence on how key aspects of globalization processes have impacted the real economy, in terms of employment and social conditions of work for women and men across a wide range of countries.

### ***Trends in women's employment***

Globalization has coincided with a global increase in female labour force participation rates which has narrowed the gender gap from 32 to 26 percentage points. A number of factors associated with globalization processes have contributed to this increase, including the growth of production for export in the developing world. With labour costs such a crucial part of international competitiveness, labour-intensive exporters have shown a preference for women workers because their wages are typically lower than men's and because women are perceived as more productive in these types of jobs.

The narrowing of the gender gap in economic participation rates has not produced commensurate gender equality in pay and status. In fact, increasing female labour force participation has coincided with an increase in informal and unprotected forms of work. Jobs in export-oriented manufacturing firms and capitalist farms producing horticultural export crops have benefited some women, giving them their first discretionary income or a greater say in the allocation of household resources. However, even in the countries where production for export has created new forms of employment, occupational segregation has been maintained: the wages and conditions of work remain far from satisfactory for women who continue to be concentrated in temporary and seasonal jobs, while the few permanent jobs that are created are reserved for men.

### ***Constraints to improved labour market outcomes for women***

#### **Labour markets as gendered institutions**

Labour markets do not operate in a vacuum. As *social* institutions they are shaped by social norms and power inequalities. Women and men do not come to the market with the same resources, be it working capital, labour (of others), social contacts and different types of skills and experiences. These differences are themselves often the outcomes of gender-based barriers and inequalities.

Both the formal rules and the informal practices that structure the operation of labour markets often reflect the gender norms of the societies in which they are embedded. Women and men tend to have access to, or are deemed appropriate for, different kinds of jobs. Payment and promotion systems, no matter how well codified, always have scope for discretion. The cultural acceptability of paid work—especially outside the home—the varying effects of women's life course and the status of their households all affect women's experiences of paid work. Women are also more likely than men to experience constraints on how they dispose of their earnings, and more likely to be restricted in their labour market activities by their socially ascribed responsibilities for unpaid domestic and care work. Hence, women's increased participation in the labour force is not a straightforward story of progress in gender equality. Moreover, many of the factors that structure labour markets and women's position within them are in turn shaped by broader policies and processes of social change.

### ***Policies associated with globalization***

Patterns of economic growth differ in their ability to generate employment of sufficient quantity and quality. This, in turn, shapes women's (as well as men's) prospects of finding work that provides good terms and conditions. There are concerns that macroeconomic policies that have been dominant over the past three decades have performed poorly in terms of generating sufficient employment that is of decent quality, that is, governed by statutory labour market regulations and/or basic legal and social protections.

**Financial liberalization:** Neoliberal monetary policies have emphasized the opening up of capital markets to external flows and keeping inflation rates low. Financial volatility and crisis in developing countries have had significant effects on the real economy, not only income decline, but also include lower employment, increasing unemployment and underemployment, and apparent shifts of workers from formal to informal labour relations. Recurring economic crises associated with financial liberalization have propelled many women into the labour force, and often into the more precarious forms of work.

**Inflation targeting:** Other key elements of the currently dominant "market friendly" monetary regime include the maintenance of price stability and low inflation rates. While very high rates of inflation (above 20 per cent) are harmful for everyone, there is little evidence to justify very low rates of inflation when these restrictive policies adversely impact employment. Emerging evidence suggests that inflation reduction episodes can have a disproportionately negative impact on women's employment: women lose more employment in percentage terms than men when employment contracts, but women do not gain employment faster than men in the fewer cases where employment expands during inflation reduction episodes.

**Trade liberalization:** Although creating employment opportunities for women in some contexts, trade liberalization has also generated adverse impacts on employment in sectors that have to compete with cheap imports. In most countries the expansion of employment in export-oriented sectors has been more than offset by decline in other sectors of manufacturing that have been hit by import competition. The effect of trade liberalization on growth and employment is contingent on a number of specific policy, country and industry circumstances, including, most importantly, the manner in which policy restrictions on imports can limit the potentially negative effects of import penetration. In addition, the increase in the number of countries expanding their exports of labour-intensive manufacturing commodities has contributed to driving down the relative prices ("terms of trade") of those goods on the global market. This has constrained the types of improvements in wages and working conditions that could have been made. This dynamic is especially damaging for women who tend to be concentrated in the types of industries that are most exposed to international competition. In countries where manufacturing industries have upgraded their products to escape the adverse terms of trade, it has been difficult for women to maintain their jobs. In the Republic of Korea and Taiwan Province of China, for example, the shift to more sophisticated electronics industries has led to a "de-feminization" of the manufacturing sector.

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