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## Globalization And Its Impact On Rural Women

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### **Abstract**

Globalization is compelling states to alter their relations with the market and civil society, as such; states are mediators of change. In many countries the onset for this changing role was the structural adjustment policies, which entailed significant cutbacks in public spending and the provision of basic services. For transition countries the dual political and economic transformation has led to a considerable decrease in public provisions and services as well..With the advent of globalization rural women encounter new opportunities as well as experience additional limitations and negative impacts due to the changes. In the short run, it is possible that some livelihoods of rural women may be threatened due to the changes in the organization of production. There is a need for developing an appropriate support system to assist them in their survival strategies. In the long run, in order to achieve and sustain the benefits that may be associated with globalization, it is necessary to design interventions to secure their livelihoods in this competitive environment by way of improving their access to resources and enhancing their human capital.

### **Introduction**

The rural sector in almost all countries is diverse, ranging from well developed commercial large-scale and medium-size farms to family operated, small land holdings which may be devoted to subsistence production and/or market production. As agricultural and livestock production is becoming more intensified and population pressures increase, some of these small land holdings are becoming increasingly marginalized and are actually producing at the sub-subsistence level.

The changes that are occurring in agricultural (crop, horticulture, live stock) production as well as in aquaculture and industry are key elements for understanding how global changes are affecting and influencing women's lives. In many cases, there has been an increase in employment opportunities for women, especially wage employment in agro-industry (especially fruit, vegetables and flowers), rural industry and export-oriented industries, including export processing zones (EPZs), as well as more self-employment (e.g. trade, handicrafts,

food processing). These positive developments, however, have not been enjoyed fully due to the fact that many women lack the necessary resources and safety nets to enable them to maximize their benefits. At the same time, traditional forms of income and subsistence are eroding in many countries. As women are often reliant on these livelihood sources, their erosion may affect them negatively. In this paper we have tried to explore changing environment in the context of unprecedented globalization processes and in turn their implications on rural woman. These are: the role of the state; commercialization of agriculture, labour intensive industrialization and export processing zones (EPZs); changing labour markets and nature of work; and new information and communication technologies (ICTs).

### **The role of the state**

Globalization is compelling states to alter their relations with the market and civil society, as such; states are mediators of change. In many countries the onset for this changing role was the structural adjustment policies, which entailed significant cutbacks in public spending and the provision of basic services. For transition countries the dual political and economic transformation has led to a considerable decrease in public provisions and services as well. It is now increasingly recognized that the state has a critical role to play in the provision of basic services, particularly to rural areas where there may not be clear incentives for the private sector. States are important actors in providing a conditioning, and often enabling, environment for the market economy, including commercial agriculture. As a consequence, a variety in the way production is organized depends in part on their policy choices. These policy choices have important implications in terms of creating enabling conditions (or not) for small farmers and making rural areas and livelihoods more appealing.

### **Commercialization of agriculture**

The forces of globalization have brought about far reaching changes in the pattern of specialization within agriculture. In many areas, subsistence agriculture is giving way to commercialized agriculture, in which both small and large farmers are involved in the production for the market, and increasingly for export markets. Other forces such as rising income and urbanization have already been creating conditions conducive to the commercialization of agriculture. But globalization has added momentum to this process by liberalizing trade regimes and by allowing freer movement of capital.

An important consequence of producing for the export market in the context of freer mobility of capital is the growing involvement of giant agro-business complexes in developing country agriculture. This has the potential of radically transforming the agriculture sector of developing countries, leading to the industrialization of agriculture that has already taken place in the developed parts of the world. At this stage, however, this phenomenon accounts for a relatively small proportion of commercialized agriculture in the developing world. Many

people, including rural women, are engaged in smallholder commercial agriculture. However, the industrialization of agriculture is leading to erosion of the "classical international division of labour" in agricultural production in some countries. The so-called nontraditional agricultural export commodities or high value foods (HVF) are becoming relatively more important than the traditional exports of coffee, tea, sugar and cocoa. These new HVF include fruit and vegetables, poultry, dairy products and shellfish. . The success of these so-called New Agricultural Countries (NACs) in pursuing their HVF strategy has depended on a combination of factors, including favourable international market conditions during the early phase, dominance and availability of domestic and foreign capital, high degree of concentration in the industry (especially in production, processing and marketing) and reliable supply of inputs. Two characteristics seem to determine the competitiveness of HVF sectors. One is the pursuit of low cost production, primarily obtained through low labour costs, in particular that of rural women. Second, HVF competitiveness depends on reaching a high degree of quality, which is important for establishing a presence in niche markets. The role of consumers in OECD countries as well as increasing standards of food safety and quality requirements (phyto-sanitary regulations) are important elements in the functioning of agro-food system. The agro-food industry is also characterized by the emergence of GCCs. The emergence of these GCCs has been significantly aided by new technologies in transportation and the computerization of much of the production process ranging from drip-irrigation to packing and increased specialization in livestock production. As a result of these trends, producers of traditional export commodities may see their market position erode as may smallholder family farmers.

An important facet of the global integration of agricultural markets is the organization of production through "contract farming" with rural producers. This means that the exporters or food giants control the production of commodities through providing technical assistance, finance, and controlling the use of fertilizers and pesticides, as well as types of seeds planted. The contract farming system can provide the opportunity to obtain an income from land-based production, to adopt improved production methods and a link to the market. Yet rural producers can also face risks of exploitation by middlemen and fluctuation in prices. With the exception of a few globally operating food giants, transnational corporations (TNCs) tend to adapt their strategies to local conditions under which HVF and more traditional commodities are produced.

### **Labour-intensive industrialization and export processing zones (EPZs)**

With the changes in the organization of production there has been an increase in labour-intensive, often export -oriented, industries located in developing countries as well as in transition economies. This development has important implications for rural areas as it entails their further integration into the market. This market integration involves a wide variety of activities ranging from rural

industries to the establishment of EPZs. Rural industrialization includes independent entrepreneurs producing for the local market as well as sub-contracting for larger domestic and foreign firms. Examples of rural industrialization are textiles and garments, food processing, carpet weaving and toys. Government policies, including those that are favouring the establishing of EPZs, are aimed to attract foreign capital by providing special arrangements such as tax breaks and suspension of environmental and labour laws. The economic incentives provided by governments made labour-intensive industries more attractive, and for the firms establishing themselves in the EPZs women became the preferred labour force because given the level of skills required, female labour is found to be cheaper than male labour. However, as has been well-documented in various literature's, the valuation of women's skills formed part of a process of gender stereotyping which depicted women as docile, nimble-fingered and only working for some pocket money, as they are not seen as the breadwinners.

### **Changing labour markets and nature of work**

The "flexibilization" of work and labour market liberalization are among the defining characteristics of the economic environment in the era of globalization. These changes have been accompanied by labour-market deregulation. As a result, in some sectors regular, full-time employment is being replaced by more diverse patterns of employment such as irregular part-time employment, outsourcing, home-based work and other forms of temporary labour arrangements which escape standard labour legislation. Such changes in the labour markets are decreasing the relative tax burden of business and making production responsive to increased volatility in demand, while shifting the costs of economic adjustment and change onto the most vulnerable, usually women. Within this process, employing female labour became more attractive because they can be hired for low pay and under less than desirable working conditions in comparison with men. With some exception, the majority of women, especially in developing countries are filling the irregular, low paying jobs with little training or promotion prospects. Although the gender differential affects of the employment and displacement of the labour markets under globalization are still controversial and not always predictable, the share of women workers particularly in the labour intensive sectors has, so far, been quite high. In the context of globalization, more and more poor rural women are able to find temporary and, in some cases, more permanent jobs in large-scale enterprises driven by export cash crop farming, agro-processing plants, and export-oriented industries, including export processing zones. Trade in natural medicinal resources, operations of agency communications systems and home-based piecework such as leather tanning, packaging and labeling are other work opportunities that have become available to some rural women with the changing work environment. For the vast majority of the rural poor – women, children and men – sporadic construction work in the cities, informal trading and trucking are some of the more conventional activities

that offer opportunities to supplement household earnings. Despite the diversification of job opportunities, much of the work that rural women are able to engage in are either at the margins of emerging industries, where high turnover rate of labour is common, or in the informal sector. The increased choice and opportunity women are finding in the labour market may have a short life and gender inequalities may be intensified in the long run. Furthermore, although women are becoming more economically active in paid employment, they still remain economically disempowered with weak bargaining power and lower incomes. In addition, increased women's participation in paid work has not diminished women's responsibilities for household tasks and childcare. The burden of unpaid work at home and a marginal position in the labour market tend to reinforce each other, making it harder for women to break out of the role of dependent and secondary breadwinner within the family.

### **New information and communication technologies (ICTs)**

Within the context of globalization ICTs constitute an important interface in the transfer of resources as well as in the organization of production. The global trend is to move toward knowledge driven society (the network society) mediated by ICTs. ICTs have the potential to break the isolation of rural women and improve their access to education and training. ICT-based education will not only be important for capacity-building of rural women and girls, but may also assist in providing more food security as rural women and girls may gain better knowledge about markets and prices. If effective measures are not taken urgently, it is highly probable that an ICT divide could widen urban-rural disparities in education and access to new forms of knowledge. This could create great disadvantages to rural households in structuring their livelihood strategies. As rural women and girls run significant risks of being further marginalized in the knowledge society and economy, it is important to specifically target them for programmes and training.

### **Analyzing the situation of rural women in the context of globalization**

An essential feature of a globalizing economy is the shifting division of labour associated with changes in the nature of specialization and production processes. How these changes affect rural women depend in the first instance on two proximate factors: what role women play in the declining activities? And how equipped they are to take advantage of the expanding activities? These two proximate factors depend in turn on a large number of underlying forces operating at the individual, household, community, state and global levels. For instance, individual skills and command over resources would have a bearing on the extent to which women participate in declining as well as expanding activities. Household structure and the nature of intra-household division of labour will also affect women's opportunities and their ability to take them. Furthermore, their ability to seize the new opportunities and to fend off the new threats will also

depend upon social norms impinging on gender division of labour in the broader economy, and the extent to which women can play an effective role in decision-making processes at the household as well as community levels. However, these underlying forces are not immutable. The constellation of these forces is constantly being altered by the processes of globalization itself, interacting with other changes occurring in the spheres of economic policy, demography, technology, and socio-cultural values.

In order to understand the situation of rural women in the context of globalization, it is therefore essential to first note women's existing conditions with regard to their command over skills and resources, household structure and gendered division of labour, and women's role in decision-making processes, and then to examine how the processes of globalization are affecting all of them:

### **Diversification of livelihood**

With increased market integration most rural households are not able to support themselves exclusively on land based activities. Therefore, the majority of households have diversified their sources of livelihood either as a survival or an accumulation strategy. This was made possible by re-structuring household division of labour to enable households to maintain their status as independent family cultivators while at the same time engage in the non-farm and non-rural sectors. The strategy a household can adopt depends on, among other factors, access to productive resources such as land, capital, education and skills. In part, this strategy can influence how households allocate their labour between farm and non-farm sectors and between wage and non-wage labour. Under market conditions the main bottleneck rural households face is cash availability. Therefore, those households with diverse sources of livelihood and predictable and regular cash earnings are able to achieve the highest level of security. Availability of cash enables households to hire labour and also invest in non-farm activities. The relatively better off farmers are able to maximize their cash earnings by venturing into non-farm activities such as operating a small grocery store, restaurant, and café in the village or nearby town centre or taking up a regular wage/salary job in the private or public sector. Supplementing land based earnings with a stable and regular non-farm income enables such households to maximize their survival and creates the possibility of savings and, for some, the accumulation of capital. The women and children of such households often do not have to work outside the home. On the other hand, households that are at the lower end of the social strata have little or no resources at their disposal to diversify their sources of livelihood. These households, whether they may have access to land or not, often must rely on cash or in kind earning of family labour for their subsistence. The situation of rural women within the context of globalization, particularly those at the lower end of the social strata, varies according to their access to resources and employment opportunities. Rights of control over land are important, since they determine access to other factors, such

as, extension services, credit and membership to farmers' organizations. In some countries, rural women continue to be deprived of equal rights to land by law. In other countries, although they may have de jure rights, they do not have de facto rights. In some cases, customary rights to land and other natural resources often enabled women to engage in and benefit from agricultural, livestock and forest based production.

However, the privatization process, notwithstanding some exceptions, which has accelerated the process of land titling, land consolidation and reorganization of the use of common property is increasingly undermining property rights, thus, depriving women of direct access to land. Privatization tends to lead to the concentration of property rights (such as access, use, control) distributed within the household and the community into the hands of male household heads or local elites. Some non-farm activities of rural women depend on access to a natural resource base. Intensive production and harvesting of forests for global markets have accelerated the degradation of critical natural resources on which the rural women from poor households depend for livelihood to augment their income. Rural women are closely associated with local ecological resources and manage biodiversity on a daily basis. A renewed interest in bio-diversity and indigenous plants and materials have created opportunities for rural women to utilize their traditional knowledge and experience to take advantage of emerging national and global markets. However, these possibilities may not be realized unless Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) are implemented in a transparent and just manner to protect the rights of local communities to indigenous resources. An important issue is the possible effects of increased privatization of agriculture extension services and financial markets on rural women whose access to information and credit is already minimal. Rural women's access to agricultural support systems has traditionally been limited, not only because extension workers generally worked with male heads of the households, but also due to the time constraints faced by women to participate in such programmes due to their heavy work load. Privatization of agricultural extension services has further adversely affected the prospects of women's access to these services. Agriculture being a high-risk venture, credit to farmers is not easily forthcoming in many countries, particularly to women. Furthermore, the cyclic nature of production and thus income creates unique constraints to access credit from commercial banks. Though many countries followed the practice of providing agricultural credit under concessional terms, the current changes directed to develop competitive credit markets could pose problems to farmers in their access to capital, unless the private sector steps in to fill the capital gap. Any changes resulting in reduced access to capital for rural households have implications for production investment and thus their livelihood strategies. Provision of micro- finance is a popular measure to support rural women's access to income generating ventures. The impact of micro- finance initiatives for rural women in general is rated to be positive. But differences are evident among the

micro-finance programmes in demonstrated approaches, commitment and success related to capacity building among rural women to be self-reliant producers and confident credit holders in their individual rights. As liberalization and financial market integration accelerate, with focus on competitive credit and efficient financial management principles, the concern is to provide a sustainable access to micro-credit for rural women. Additionally, it should be recognized that micro-credit for petty trade should be only the entry point for economic advancement of rural women, but long-term focus should be upgrading their economic enterprises to ensure sustainable livelihood.

### **New employment opportunities and working conditions**

Commercialization of agriculture together with trade liberalization, especially in developing countries, has created new employment opportunities for women in rural areas which are also accompanied by new risks. For instance, export crop expansion may force women from permanent agricultural employment into seasonal employment. In Thailand for example, women started to subcontract to multinational corporations on family-owned plots to produce baby corn and asparagus on former paddy land or started to raise shrimps under contract to foreign companies. Often such employment arrangements in the agricultural export sector entail low pay labour-intensive manual jobs. However, despite its low wages, the net returns from such activities may be an improvement over the traditional agricultural activities it is replacing. Such is the case in Thailand, where women now earn more in a shorter work day than what they did by cultivating rice. Globalization is affecting the livelihood prospects of rural women not only through its effects on agriculture but also through its effects on industry. Trade liberalization coupled with free movement of capital has enabled many developing countries to set up export industries using cheap labour. This has opened up employment opportunities for women, especially in the garments and electronics sectors. In many countries in South and Southeast Asia, women are moving in large numbers from rural to urban areas to make use of these opportunities, resulting in a distinct feminization of labour force in export-oriented industries. In most cases, previously these women did not have any job prospects at all. The most they could aspire to was the life as a maid, or a prostitute, or a petty trader. For them, the prospect of employment in export industries has amounted to improvement in their livelihood opportunities, with far-reaching economic and social consequences (see for example, Tzannatos 1995). Livestock production in developing countries is also undergoing major transformation due to global demand for variety of livestock products particularly from developed countries. These demands are diversifying livestock production, and are also creating new industries around livestock products similar to what is happening in the agricultural sector. While the changes in the organization of livestock production may favour male labour, female labour appears to be preferred for the labour intensive tasks involved in the processing and production of livestock products.



New technologies for agricultural production are leading to the creation of new employment opportunities in rural industries and agribusiness enterprises. However, such opportunities may favour those who have certain skills, capacities and access to social networks and assets. This may pose a danger for women unless they are provided with education and training to acquire the necessary skills. Such a selective phenomenon is evident where employers in certain export industries prefer young women with some education over older women who often do not. This problem becomes acute when the nature of specialization shifts from relatively unskilled activities to skill intensive activities. On the other hand, withdrawal of state provisions for basic services often increases the burden of reproductive work on women thereby restricting their ability to take up opportunities in productive, paid employment.

In general rural women work long hours, and under difficult circumstances often without proper technologies to ease their productive and reproductive work. The wage levels are still lower for women compared to men. In some organized sectors, the new jobs entail low wages and poor work conditions and the unorganized agricultural and informal sectors are totally outside of the sphere of formal labour laws. In addition, new work arrangements have also been introduced to increase the competitiveness of agribusiness enterprise, rural industries or export processing zone firms and contract farming. Such arrangements may involve complex contractual arrangements which are not self-evident to the poorly informed new employees who have low or no formal education. Nevertheless, women in rural areas and especially those who are under extreme economic deprivation seem to prefer the option of having access to jobs with pay irrespective of the terms. In this connection, domestic work, in the cities or abroad, has for long been a major source of employment for the poor women of rural areas. For instance, many Filipino women migrate to become nannies or housekeepers. The intensification of trade in services, over the past two decades has increased and broadened the scope for such work for women in many parts of the developing world. By and large, the benefits accruing to rural women and men, through new economic opportunities brought by globalization differ due to prevailing gender norms and inequalities. Men appear to be reluctant to assume work traditionally associated with women (particularly reproductive work) unless there is an increase in status or when it is well paid. Women may be reluctant to assume work traditionally associated with men, but do so out of need.

### **Changing patterns of labour mobility**

The demand for cheap labour in the newly emerging industries, agribusinesses, EPZs and services that were established often with the help of foreign capital continues to be strong. Women are preferred workers because they can be hired for lower pay in 'irregular' jobs and often under less favourable terms than men, and easily dispensed when their labour is no longer needed. This process is particularly important in view of the ongoing process of impoverishment in rural areas due to diverse factors such as land scarcity, over-grazing, a loss of

productive and monetary value of land and a decrease in agricultural productivity. Daily hardship and lack of educational and social services continue to be strong push factors. In some cases, rural women (and men) leave their villages to take advantage of employment opportunities elsewhere, including overseas. Migration has, thus, become both a process and consequence of globalization. Movements of labour have been from rural to rural, as young women and men join the work force of agribusiness; rural to urban, where girls and adult women leave for towns and cities to enter the service and manufacturing sectors, including the EPZs; as well as internationally, to work as nannies, maids, factory workers, entertainers, or teachers and nurses. In some instances, the migration is cyclical or temporary, in others, it is more permanent. In most cases, labour movement is voluntary. However, there has also been a rise in forced migration, such as the trafficking in women and girls for sex work, domestic service, or sweatshops. There are many actors involved in the migration process. States, private enterprises and market forces influence the structuring and channeling of migratory flows. At the household level the whole family or household may be involved in the decision which family member should be migrating. At times middlemen or agencies play a central role in organizing the migration of rural people, with possible risk of exploitation, in particular for women and girls. Although generally migration results in the redistribution of tasks and responsibilities among those left behind, there appears to be a strong difference as to the impact of migration on household division of labour and gender relations depending on whether a woman or a man is migrating. When migration results in the loss of male labour, households resort to different strategies in order to survive. One strategy, in the social cultural setting in which women are able to enter male domains, is for the women to undertake the work previously done by migrants. Sometimes, however, this strategy may result in the work not being done. The absence of a husband or other male head of household often forces women to take over his tasks and responsibilities. While this means increasing women's burden, it may have empowering effects as this affords a woman the opportunity to acquire new skills (e.g. negotiating with government departments and traders, learning to use agricultural equipment). Women may (e.g. in Egypt) also experience an upward occupational mobility due to vacancies, which under different circumstances would have been occupied by men. Another strategy, when migrant remittances are sufficient, is for women to utilize this income to contract labour for certain agricultural and livestock production tasks traditionally done by men. In addition, when remittance income permits, some women are able to hire labour to assume some of the most labour-intensive tasks, allowing them to assume income-generating activities off farm. However, in some societies a man's role and responsibility may be taken over by a male relative, or the woman whose husband migrates has to move in with her husband's relatives. In these instances the women cannot attain control of the household resources because these are being delegated to the male relatives. If, in the absence of the husband, the wife is

deprived of participation in family and community decision-making processes as well as in direct benefit from the remittances, she is adversely affected by the migration. Women may also find it difficult to cope with numerous family responsibilities without the support of their husbands such as in raising and educating the children. Apart from economic reasons, which are of primary importance, women and in particular young single women, tend to migrate in order to escape the hardship of rural life and the patriarchal and social control. In the course of their migration women may develop their skills and decide to build an independent life rather than resume their former roles in the household. However, since women in their migration rely on social networks that assist them in finding a job and in providing a safety net in times of emergencies, their ability to act independently may be curtailed or weakened. Therefore, they may not fully benefit from the opportunities the migratory process brings, such as exposure to new values, ideas, roles and market demands. With increased demand for cheap female labour and aggressive job advertising on the part of prospective employers, rural women who are relatively isolated from the outside world are faced with the risks of trafficking and HIV/AIDS. The international community, including the United Nations system addressed this issue on various occasions. Men and women migrants often have to renegotiate their position within the relationship, household and community upon their return. Men tend to resume their decision-making position in the household more easily than women, if they wish so. On the other hand, long-term migrants often do not wish to resume their traditional work and prefer to engage in different activities that earn better income or bring higher status. The implication for households is that women continue to fulfill these tasks. For example, in western Sudan returning male migrants prefer to engage in trade rather than resume agricultural work in order to maintain their income. Rural migrants generally return home with new skills, work experiences, ideas, savings and technologies. At times the values women bring back home are more conservative. Such has been the case of Egyptian women returning from the Gulf countries. More often than not, however, women come home with greater self-confidence and higher self-esteem. In the Philippines, returning women overseas contract workers are beginning to engage in community affairs and politics. As with women migrants elsewhere, indigenous women migrants in Mexico come home more inclined to challenge the established gender roles and prevailing customs in the family. They are less likely to fit into their former roles and tend to abandon more easily local traditions because of their more restrictive nature for women than men. This may create strong conflicts leading to women's re-migration. The pressure to leave again tends to be strong when the money sent home by a female migrant has been used differently than she anticipated (spent rather than saved or invested). This leaves her with neither savings nor an economic base for the future, which for single women can diminish their prospects of getting married and for women with economic dependants could mean going back to the starting point. Generally, remittances from migrants improve the

quality of life of rural households, although their long-term impact and importance for sustaining rural life differ. A distinction can be made between remittances which are being used to feed the household members and remittances used for investments purposes.

The impact of remittances on household well being depends very much on who in the household control income. There is a tendency that income controlled by women is usually invested in the household and its members, and less on consumer items. Male remittances tend to arrive less regularly than those of women, and men take a larger share of their earnings income for their own personal use (alcohol, second wife, cigarettes) than women who are more likely to invest in production inputs (cattle, paying of debts, fertilisers and the such). Men tend to buy consumer items such as radio, bicycles, and cars, even in instances when their income may be needed for household survival. The remittances sent by daughters tend to be more regular, in particular if it is a transfer from woman to woman. Research has also shown that in some cases young and unmarried women have tended to keep a larger portion of their income for themselves.

### **Household dynamics**

Globalization is associated in many places with an emerging diversity of household types, changes in decision-making, gender division of labour and intra-household relations. The emerging diversity of household types includes an increasing number of households headed by women as well as those containing multi-generations. There are also households which remain closely linked even though the members are split as a result of migration (multi-spatial households). The precise structure of multi- generational households varies. Apart from the typical extended family set-up, multi- generational households may include additional kin or may have a missing middle generation due to out-migration or HIV/AIDS related death, particularly in Africa. This results in a growing number of households in which grandmothers, single mothers or even children are looking after extended households which also include non-family members. Female-headed households (FHH) need to be recognized as a separate category including single person-households, and two and three generational households. Where men are away on temporary and seasonal migration, headship may be of temporary nature. It is also in these households that the men may continue to maintain the decision-making power. But there is a tendency of the development of female-headed households without a link to a male partner either because the woman is not married, is widowed, divorced or abandoned. It is in these households that female headship induces long-term changes in household structures. In these households women have the decision-making power and the full social and economic responsibility for the well being of its members. When women migrate, they tend to maintain close links with their rural homes with reciprocal benefits, for example, sending cash remittances and bringing back food to urban areas. Despite migration, the links between the members of the

household remain. These intra household links also facilitate transfer of new ideas and cultural norms, values and habits. When men migrate, they often establish secondary households with new partners. This reduces remittances back to the rural areas and may create household conflicts.

As already discussed, one effect of globalization is a sharp increase in the diversification of different types of work household members may engage in. This as well as changes in household structure are affecting the division of labour within households. The opening up of new opportunities, such as wage labour, high value crop production or income generating activities can increase economic returns but would also increase the demand for labour. The majority of rural households respond by restructuring their household division of labour where women and children may be disproportionately burdened. Child labour for poor rural households is particularly important for achieving livelihood security. Children, in many instances escaping the social and legal factors that restrict the work options for adult women and men, are able to go just about anywhere and do any type of work, such as working as porter, shoe shiner, street vendor. Women's labour is particularly indispensable and often irreplaceable in rural areas. While men might be able to shift their work performance in accordance with the available work opportunities, women do not have the same flexibility. Productive labour of rural women includes non-remunerated family labour (unpaid family work) and paid labour (wage labour and piece rate work). In household production rural women's work is characterized as "multi-tasking" and "labour intensive" as they shoulder the responsibility for productive and reproductive tasks. Yet, policy makers do not adequately recognize the contribution of women and children to rural economies. Although there has been some progress in including women's unpaid work in official statistics, in most countries this issue is not recognized. In resource rich areas, certain industrial and manufacturing firms locate their production facility absorbing local labour. Location of such enterprises also capture state subsidies and various services. These new enterprises, while offering rural employment, also siphon resources such as fertile land, water for irrigation, and forest, that were crucial for traditional rural household production and for ensuring food security for many families. In such situations the burden of compensating for these resources often fall on the households, namely women who should spend more time and energy looking for these resources. The process of migration also has mixed impact on the situation of women in rural households. Migration of some family members may increase household income, but it can also cause an increase in women's workload. The impact of the additional workload on women is particularly strongly felt in areas where social support systems and services are weak or have eroded. Often children, particularly girls, are then called upon to assume some of the domestic tasks. Women employ different strategies to compensate the loss of labour. They may organize labour exchange with other women, work longer hours themselves or, if they have means from remittance and other income sources, hire additional

labour. But they might also adopt such strategies as reducing the area under cultivation, switching to less labour-intensive but also less nutritious crops. The influence of women on the decision-making process in the household and in the community is a reflection of customs and cultures and of power relations. These relations are deeply embedded in society and are resistant to change. However, globalization is having a major impact on customary decision-making patterns. Changes in household structures have implied renegotiations of gender relations, with outcomes dependent on individual choices, socio-cultural context as well as economic factors. This may result in the possibility for increase in psychological problems and increased violence against women. In the context of improvement in women's economic position, women are more likely to control resources that directly affect all household members. This may enable women to take on a more active role in male dominated decision-making structures. It may also influence their social relations at the household and community level. Woman's role may no longer be only defined by her relationship to a man as his wife and mother of children but as a person influencing community matters or as a person engaging in a wide range of enterprises and social activities. This is reflected by rural women's participation in revolving credit schemes, cooperative ventures and increased networking at the work place as well as the participation in adult education and community programmes. Information technology has also impacted directly and indirectly on rural women. Many have access to radio and at times television. This has brought about a dramatic increase of information into their homes and has introduced them to patterns of gender relations and decision-making which exist in other cultures.

In many countries, the most visible change, which is taking place with regard to gender relations relate to marriage. As rural women adjust to economic change and as a result of earning an independent income and gaining access to new ideas or lifestyles, the factors influencing her choice of a partner or form of cohabitation tend to alter. For example, she may place more emphasis on personal characteristics rather than on economic prospects and cultural expectations. Worldwide there are a growing number of women choosing to delay marriage or remain single while still choosing to have children. There are communities in which migrant unmarried women returning home are looked at as particularly desirable marriage partner due to their economic independence, skills and abilities. There are, however, also communities in which these gains are perceived as a threat making it more difficult for the women to get married and readjust to the community. Women sex workers are particularly vulnerable to acts of harassment. Migrant women returning home are forced to adopt to the prevalent norms of gender relations and in the course of readjustment may be subject to total subservience to male family members. The greater the degree of exposure rural women have to cultural and social changes in the rest of the world, including human rights instruments, the more likely it is that these changes will also shape and reinforce their independent decision-making roles and influence gender

relations. The impact of globalization has also brought about changes in the nature of local government, with rural women being drawn into decision-making structures on account of their new influence in the household and the community. This is also reflected in the conscious efforts of political parties to recruit rural women as candidates in all levels of politics. However, they are often not promoted within party structures to decision-making positions without some form of intervention.

### **Challenges and Opportunities for Woman**

With the advent of globalization rural women encounter new opportunities as well as experience additional limitations and negative impacts due to the changes. In the short run, it is possible that some livelihoods of rural women may be threatened due to the changes in the organization of production. There is a need for developing an appropriate support system to assist them in their survival strategies. In the long run, in order to achieve and sustain the benefits that may be associated with globalization, it is necessary to design interventions to secure their livelihoods in this competitive environment by way of improving their access to resources and enhancing their human capital. Moreover, it is necessary to engage in social activism aimed at changing the existing norms that shape the gender division of labour. Woman in almost all societies experience following challenges and opportunities:

- The changing nature of specialization brought about by globalization entails that certain economic activities become more attractive and others less so; the effects of these changes on rural women are mediated by gender, ethnicity, race and class.
- The long-term prospects for men and women who have been displaced due to market integration may differ. This will depend on their human resource endowments and physical assets, as well as socio-cultural norms which have a bearing on the gender division of labour.
- Women's traditional reproductive role may restrict them from seizing new opportunities created by globalization. When women do take up new opportunities they may experience tension between their productive and reproductive roles.
- Socio-cultural norms are constantly undergoing change. In some ways processes of globalization are accelerating such transformations through the changes in employment and income earning opportunities and diffusion of consumption patterns, lifestyles, the media, new technologies and products.
- Globalization has been associated with increased feminization of the labour force, as the female share of employment has increased worldwide. Much of the increase has resulted from a movement of female labour from the subsistence sector in rural areas to the paid economy.

- While new economic opportunities for rural women may have resulted from globalization, the benefits accruing to women and men differ due to constraints posed by their differential access to resources and by the gender norms that shape their willingness and capacity to take advantage of non-traditional job opportunities or new production technologies.
- Even within the context of production diversification most households in rural areas still depend on land, and natural resources for their livelihood, though not exclusively. In this context, it is disconcerting to note that the currently accelerated process of land titling, privatization of common property and land consolidation for efficient production can increase the risk of women losing the existing property rights.
- Globalization has opened up opportunities for rural women into various types of paid non-farm activities. Since many of these activities are dependent on the natural resource base, it is a matter of some concern that intensive production and harvesting of forests for global markets have led to the degradation of critical natural resources.
- Renewed interests in bio-diversity and indigenous plants and materials have created opportunities for rural women to utilize their traditional knowledge and experience to take advantage of emerging national and global markets. However, these possibilities may not be realized unless Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights are implemented in a transparent and just manner to protect the rights of local communities to indigenous resources.
- The move towards export-oriented industries based on unskilled labour has opened up many new employment opportunities for rural women. However, as the globalizing economies move on to more advanced forms of specialization requiring skilled labour, there is a danger that women will lose out at that stage unless appropriate actions are taken, well in advance, to enable them to acquire education and the requisite skills.
- One of the consequences of increasing migratory flows is that the absence of a husband or male member of the household often results in women taking over his tasks and responsibilities. While this means increasing women's burden, it may have empowering effects as this affords a woman the opportunity to acquire new skills and capacities.
- When remittance income permits, some women are able to hire labour reducing their work burden. However, in the absence of the husband, when the woman has to move in with her husband's relatives or patriarchal control is passed on to other male relatives, the women cannot attain control of the household resources, thus, being adversely affected by her husband's migration.
- When women migrate in search of new job opportunities, they may develop the skills and decide to build an independent life rather than resume their former roles in the household upon their return. Women tend



to migrate using a network that assists them in finding a job and serves as a safety net in times of emergencies. However, such a network can also weaken their ability to utilize the opportunities the migratory process brings along such as becoming exposed and accustomed to new values, roles and market demands.

- In general both men and women have to renegotiate their positions within the relationship, household and community, upon their return. When women migrants return, they generally are less likely to fit into their former roles and tend to abandon more easily local traditions, supposedly because of their more restrictive nature for women than men. They are also more inclined to challenge the established gender roles and prevailing customs in the family. This may create strong conflicts leading to women's re-migration. Long-term male migrants, however, often do not wish to resume their traditional work and prefer to engage in other activities.
- One effect of globalization is a sharp increase in the diversification of the different types of work household members engage in. This as well as changes in household structure are affecting the division of labour within households sometimes leading to increasing work burden for women. This tendency has been reinforced by increasing migration of male family members. The impact of the additional workload on women is particularly strongly felt in areas where social support systems and services are weak or eroded. Often children, particularly girls, are then called upon to assume some of the domestic tasks.
- Globalization has given way to conditions that have the potential to significantly alter customary decision-making structures within the household. Changes in household structures have implied re-negotiation of gender relations, with outcomes dependent on individual choices, socio-cultural context as well as economic factors.
- Some rural women have become the only breadwinners in the household, as male members have become unemployed due to the displacement effect of labour markets. While this situation has enabled women to gain greater access to decision making power, at the same time, it has increased the possibility for greater exposure to violence.
- By and large, however, women's involvement in non-traditional activities and paid employment has changed the patterns of decision-making within rural households. From being passive participants in male-dominated decision-making structures, women are now gaining control of resources that directly affect them and other members of the household.
- One of the consequences of globalization has been greater exposure of rural women to cultural and social changes taking place in the rest of the world, including international human rights instruments. It is likely that these changes may shape and reinforce their independent decision-making roles. In some countries, current changes in the nature of local governance

have increased the potential for women to be drawn into decision-making structures.

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