



## ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOCIETY AFTER GLOBALIZATION

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### **Abstract:**

Globalization and its impact on women have been of considerable interest in contemporary world. Richard H Robbins in his book, Global Problems and the culture of Capitalism says that “Women do two thirds of the world’s work, receive ten percent of world’s income and own one percent of the means of production.” The above statement shows a clear picture of working women in global world and from this statement we can easily infer the current status of women workers in the era of globalization. In this paper we attempt to present the role of working women in global world and the problems and challenges which they face in society after globalization.

**Key Words:** Globalization, Women, Society

### **Introduction:**

Globalization refers to “the development of an increasingly integrated global economy marked especially by free trade, free flow of capital, and the tapping of cheaper foreign labor markets.” (Merriam-Webster)

Globalization is an often-discussed but seldom-defined phenomenon. At a broad level, globalization is an increase in the impact on human activities of forces that span national boundaries. These activities can be economic, social, cultural, political, technological, or even biological, as in the case of disease. Additionally, all of these realms can interact.

If we look into the history then we find that globalization is not a new phenomena. Globalization has taking place for centuries and, with time, has accelerated, from the colonization of the inhabited parts of the world to the appearance of nations, from conquests to independent countries, from sailboats and caravans to steamboats, truck fleet and cargo planes, from trade in a few commodities to global production and distribution networks and to the present explosion of international flows services, capital, and information. The effects of



globalization are widely debated. Globalization attracts increasing interest and importance in contemporary world affairs. The subject of globalization and its impact on women has been of considerable interest in most countries

In the last 30 years women have come a long, long way. Our lives are nobler and richer than they were, but they are also fiendishly difficult...the contradictions women face have never been more bruising than they are now... On every side speechless women endure endless hardship, grief and pain in a world system that creates billions of losers for every handful of winners. It's time to get angry again.

Globalization has had such negative consequences for women and children that some commentators argue that 'globalization is a man'. They point to the way women suffer disproportionately from IMF and World Bank policies as public services are cut and they are forced to care for sick, disabled and older relatives, as well as earn a living. But globalization could equally be a woman. Capitalism's expansion across the globe has depended on a massive influx of tens of millions of women into the workforce who had traditionally been dependent on husbands and male relatives. Globalization has contradictory effects on women. Those who assign male gender to globalization are right to point to how women's role in reproduction and the family means they suffer more from the effects of the neo-liberal agenda--but that's only half the story. It has also brought great freedom to women, especially those living in traditionally conservative countries like Indonesia, Ireland and Thailand, where women are able for the first time to be economically independent of men and to have at least some choice in their personal lives. Ultimately, by bringing women into the workforce, globalization has given women a power they lacked in the past--the power to end the system that breeds poverty, exploitation and oppression.

In general, globalization has strengthened women's position. Their participation in market economy has also been fostered by the tide of globalization. However, this development has been uneven whether between countries or among socioeconomic groups within the same country.

Economic arguments on the effects of globalization on women fall into two broad groups, one intensely critical and the other basically optimistic, but with reservations and qualifications. From the critical point of view, economic globalization has largely negative consequences for women. It confines them to low pay, low status, often part-time jobs that reinforce their



subordination and perpetuate the de-valorization of women's work in most societies. Demand among multinational firms for cheap, flexible labor has encouraged offshore production using low-paid women. Women, however, remain excluded from the more stable and higher-paying jobs in heavy industry. In Pettman's account, globalization (defined as increasing capital mobility, trade, and offshore manufacturing) leads to an "increasing feminization of labor" because women continue to be "constructed as dependents" and thus confined to the worst paying jobs. The removal of barriers to transnational investment, far from empowering women, has brought them dismal jobs in offshore production sites where they are subject to sexual discrimination and harassment. Furthermore, competition from foreign firms undercuts efforts to help women launch local "microenterprises." Some within the critical camp acknowledge that the picture for women as workers in an era of mobile capital is somewhat mixed, but see it as largely discouraging. Some women may benefit from new jobs, but their "work is highly exploitative and features low wages, poor working conditions, suppression of trade unions, and little opportunity for security or advancement."

In addition, the structural adjustment and market liberalization policies that have accompanied globalization are particularly damaging to women. They lead to cuts in public sector jobs that are often disproportionately held by women, they undercut social programs that benefit women, and they inhibit labor organization by women. Further, in an increasingly volatile economic context, women are often the first to suffer in times of financial crisis. Evidence from the Asian Financial crisis shows that women were more likely than men to lose their jobs. Another argument is that industrial development causes environmental damage that disproportionately degrades life for Third World women. Women suffer the most from ecological problems because they are responsible for most family sustenance; finding food and fuel become harder, and diets suffer.

### **Women and Globalization:**

Globalization affects the social and political construction of a gendered "change of world" in three distinct but overlapping ways. First, globalization propels women into the public sphere of marketplace. Like men, women need cash to survive in a global economy. Second, related but distinct, globalization weakens the public/private distinction. Traditional boundaries between the workplace and the home, the public sphere of the market and the private sphere of the family,



become increasingly porous. Third, globalization increases women's visibility through media exposure and through a growing body of sex disaggregated UN data and its dissemination through the internet. Researchers have noted and begun to correct the relative lack of such data and the resultant economic invisibility of the world's women, especially the most marginalized.

While women are obviously a diverse group, compared to men they are overwhelmingly economically disadvantaged. This is shown starkly and redundantly in UNdata. As Dr. Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Director of United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), observed at the Beijing Conference on Women in 1995:

It is not acceptable for women to constitute 70 percent of the world's 1.3 billion absolute poor. Nor is it acceptable for women to work two-thirds of the world's working hours, but earn only one-tenth of the world's income and own less than one-tenth of the world's property.

Globalization both improves women's situation and makes it worse. While a recent study by economists at the International Center for Research on Women concludes that "women have generally benefited from improvements in the world economy," the experts in another symposium describe "the overall negative effects of globalization on women." Everyone agrees, however, that globalization affects men and women differently. This is attributable, in part, to their very different roles in most cultures, and the fact that men, in general, have much higher incomes and much greater access to capital. Women earn less than men everywhere. They are paid less than men for doing the same work, and they are limited to low-income sectors by widespread sex-based occupational segregation. Even as globalization increases economic polarization in general, it seems to decrease the earning gap between men and women. For many women, globalization has been a mixed blessing, and for some it has been a disaster.

The impact of globalization on cultures is complex, and the impact on women within these cultures is especially so. As Nathan Glazer concedes, "We are all multiculturalists now." It is generally recognized and accepted that there are many different ways of perceiving and living in the world and that these are culturally and socially constructed. Indeed, international human rights law explicitly recognizes and protects a right to culture. At the same time, as American feminist Katha Pollitt observes, "In its demand for equality for women, feminism sets itself in opposition to virtually every culture on earth. You could say that multiculturalism demands respect for all cultural traditions, while feminism interrogates and challenges traditions."



Women are also playing a larger role in agriculture after globalization. Because of expanding opportunities for men outside agriculture, land degradation, drought, and other factors that reduce farm yields, men have abandoned their farms, leaving the women in charge. Women farmers, however, generally have less access to resources such as credit and farm implements. They have also historically been neglected by agricultural extension services. Traditional human rights law addressing fair and safe working conditions in the workplace has not been helpful for these women. Such rights are often predicated on a male model of what Joan Williams calls an "ideal worker," that is, a worker with a wife.

Globalization is a multi-dimensional process of economic, political, cultural, and ideological change. It has had a mixed impact on women's rights. On the one hand, it has led to increasing violations of women's economic, political, and cultural rights in large measure due to the withering away of the welfarist/developmentalist state, the feminization of poverty, the expansion of religious fundamentalisms, and new forms of militarism and conflict. It has been noted by many international women's organizations, for example, that the new trade agreements contravene the spirit and often the letter of international conventions on human rights, labor rights, and women's rights. On the other hand, aspects of globalization have provided women with increasing opportunities to work in solidarity at national, regional, and international levels to demand their rights.

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