

Introduction

What is at stake as we contemplate the future of the multilateral system is much more than trade and economics. It involves questions of political and economic security. It is about how relations among countries and peoples are to be structured. It determines whether we foster international solidarity or descend into a spiral of global friction and conflict.

Renato Ruggiero, 1996

This statement made by Ruggiero, the former director-general of the World Trade Organization (WTO), highlights the complex and contradictory nature

positioned as seemingly neutral, and gender,² class and race relations, through which it is mediated, are assumed to be without relevance to the functioning of the global marketplace. However, as several feminist theorists have both argued and illuminated, the market (Beneria, 1999a; Joeke and Weston, 1994; Kabeer, 2000; Sen, 1996 and 1994; and Strassmann, 1993) and economic restructuring (Bakker, 1996 and 1994; Beneria and Feldman, 1992; Elson, 1991; and Kabeer and Humphrey, 1991) theories, policies and their

framework of bilateral, regional and international trade agreements.⁴ Many have opened their markets to international competition at a pace that is faster than that experienced in increased growth and reductions in poverty levels at the national level.⁵ Through their facilitation of the Uruguay Round agreements,⁶

Organization and economic and social ministries, reinforce, constrain, or expand women's positions in the market and the larger society.⁷

The reality of developing countries membership in the World Trade Organization, coupled with the assumption that trade leads to growth and development, underline a principle development belief and approach of multilateral institutions. They hold the view that development must be partially facilitated through the integration of developing countries into the global economy. This belief ignores several issues that are critical to the processes of economic growth. For example, it fails to take into consideration the fact that a country's initial condition and position within the world economic and political orders influence both its market structure and trade outcomes; and that the history of colonialization, and patriarchy inform the productive, human resources, infrastructure, and reproduo

Caring for the Economy

It is necessary to recognise the specific functional relationship between production and reproduction.

Antonella Picchio, 1992

A feminist analysis of globalization has to: (i) interrogate the gendered dimensions of those theories, such as comparative advantage, that inform it; (ii) reveal the ways in which economic institutions, processes, and relations are not outside of, or prior to, the political and the social but constitutive of it, and gendered; and (iii) bring into historical visibility women's and men's participation in economic activities – this entails empirical studies, as well as discussions of their role(s) in, and the links between, reproductive and productive work, and the gendered effects of the public/private divide.⁹ Such analyses can result in more complete understandings of the causes of growth, development and poverty, and result in more effective and gender-aware policies aimed at improving the material realities of women and men living in poverty.

The division of the world into the economic and non-economic or public and private spheres has resulted in both the theoretical isolation of the economy from the private or reproductive sphere, and the erasure of the role(s) of the latter in the maintenance of the former. Informed by this omission, classical and neo-classical economists, as well as new trade theorists exclude caring labour¹⁰ from their definitions of productive work. The value of reproductive work is further erased by those economic models that calculate production on the basis of monetarily compensated goods and services, thereby excluding unremunerated caring labour (Elson, 1993). In turn, this erasure has facilitated the formulations of allocative and distributive policies and actions that are gendered, in that they disproportionately favour men, e.g., calculations of social security benefits that are based on paid work. Thus in order to address issues that pertain

⁹ In this paper I focus on points (ii) and (iii).

¹⁰ Folbre (1995) defines caring labour as that which is “undertaken out of affection or a sense of responsibility for other people, with no expectation of immediate pecuniary reward”. She also notes that this type of labour is associated with tasks in which women often specialize, such as caring for a parent.

to the empowerment of women, analyses of linkages and feedbacks between macro policies, such as those influencing labour markets, and meso level institutions such as firms and social service agencies, and the material realities of women and men are necessary.¹¹

For example, it is important to recogn

than unskilled labour, an

states, and poverty reduction, such as multilateral, regional and national institutions, and civil society organizations.

Policing for Poverty Reduction and Women's Empowerment

The experience of poverty is both shared and distributed within families. All suffer, but some suffer more than others.

Chamber, 1991

... the term empowerment refers to a range of activities, from individual self-assertion to collective resistance, protest and mobilisation that challenge basic power relations. For individuals and groups where class, cas

social and political structures at the national and international levels. In addition, it recognized the importance of women's agency and self-transformation.

Thus, the initial theoretical framework through which the original concept of women's empowerment

Stromquist (1995), in her article on educational empowerment for women, interprets empowerment as a “socio-political concept that goes beyond formal

limited participation in political and economic institutions. Women, in particular, face institutional obstacles to control land and other productive resources. This structural poverty is exacerbated in many countries by the processes of globalization. The gendered dimensions of poverty may be usefully understood in terms of the differential entitlements, capabilities and rights conferred to women and men.

Poverty is tied to a lack of access to, and control over, productive resources, physical goods and income, which results in individual and/or group deprivation, vulnerability and powerlessness. It has various manifestations, including hunger and malnutrition, ill-health, and limited or no access to education, health care, safe housing and paid work environments. It also includes experiences of economic, political and social discrimination. Poverty, then, is not merely a function of material conditions but is also constitutive through the institutions and ideologies that diff

results will be limited as it is very difficult to isolate the many variables involved in reconstituting the material realities of women and men.¹⁹

An agenda for eradicating poverty and, in particular, its gendered effects requires the dismantling of the institutions and ideologies that maintain women's subordination and justify inequality in terms of political, social and economic resources (Beneria and Bisnath, 1999). To this end, multilateral institutions can work with governments, nongovernmental organizations, and the private sector to:

- Promote, through appropriate laws, legislation and public awareness programmes, the removal of legal obstacles and cultural constraints to women's access to and control over productive resources, such as land and credit;
- Encourage the formulation, and implementation, of gender-aware and development focussed macroeconomic policies and programmes, by facilitating the use of appropriate data in the design of policies and programmes. This will entail the support for research on the effects of trade liberalization, development and poverty reduction policies and programmes on women and men.
- Encourage, through appropriate economic and social policies, the balanced distribution of the gains from trade. In addition, the "winners"

- Ensure that the implementation of the new trading agreements do not negatively impact prices of basic goods and services, and women's and men's household survival strategies;
- Ensure that gender inequalities are reduced, and not intensified, as a result of globalization;
- Ensure that any loss in tax revenue resulting from economic liberalization will not adversely affect the provision of social services;
- Ensure that social policie

- What is the desirable pace of trade liberalisation in different sectors? What are the adjustment costs, regulatory challenges, and the effects on the attainment of certain social objectives? For example, in the context of the General Agreement on Trade in Services, could of the

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