



**Dialogue** on  
**Globalization**

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## **Engendering Policy Coherence for Development**

Gender issues for the global policy  
agenda in the year 2005

## **Dialogue on Globalization**

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## Preface

Numerous studies have shown that economic policy impacts on gender inequalities. This is not to say that economic policies always exacerbate the inequalities that exist between men and women. But more often than not they do. Hence the question arises what policy makers should and can do to address the gender implications of economic policies. To come up with answers is not an easy task. At least two hurdles stand in the way.

First and foremost, in a globalized world it is increasingly difficult to trace the origins of economic policies. Policy makers at national level claim that their decisions are influenced by global developments and by pressures from international bodies such as the World Trade Organization and the International Financial Institutions. Representatives of these institutions in turn argue that their decisions solely reflect the will of the member states of these organizations and hence point to the responsibility of the respective governments and parliaments. What looks like a typical blame game can also be called – using the language of the present study – *policy incoherence*.

While one form of policy incoherence is *vertical* i.e. between the different levels of policy making, there is also a *horizontal* version of it. When asked about the gender implications of their decisions, policy makers normally refer to existing social policies. National labor laws and international social standards for example set out the objective of gender equality in the world of labor. All too often, however, it is overlooked that social goals are undermined by decisions in other arenas such as trade or macroeconomic policies.

What is the way out of these dilemmas? In the present study, Maria Floro and Hella Hoppe argue in favor of a *policy coherence* approach to gender policy. They call this *engendering policy coherence*. One of their points of departure is the Financing for Development process, which is driven by the United Nations. The call for more policy coherence is a key feature of this process.

While not shying away from a clear stance on the issues, the study's authors do not provide us with quick fixes. Instead, they unravel the complex relationship that exists between macro-policies at different levels, the changes in today's world of labor and the social situation of women and men, particularly those living in the developing parts of the world. The authors' arguments are based on a thorough understanding of the gender dimension of economics and solid firsthand knowledge of the growing body of research and literature available on the subject.

We are publishing this occasional paper at a time of increasing optimism and expectations in the international development community. The upcoming Summit on the Millennium Development Goals, to be held in New York in September 2005, and the 6<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization, due to take place in Hong Kong a few months later, provide the background for this optimism. By pointing to the gender dimension of globalization, we wish to contribute to the debate that will ensue in the coming months.

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# 1

## Executive Summary

The year 2005 presents a unique opportunity to continue the momentum recently developed through participation of UNCTAD XI and civil society in WTO meetings and to mobilize political and public support for greater policy coherence for development. This concept of policy coherence would require that the international trade and financial systems fully support, and operate in accordance with, the agreed UN commitments, especially as regards gender equality, poverty reduction and women's empowerment. A horizontal approach toward policy coherence involves an examination of the vertical linkages between the macroeconomic environment created by international trade, investment and loan agreements, and adjustments and changes at the national, sectoral, household and individual levels. Using case studies, the present paper explores the distributional consequences and gendered outcomes of the current international trade and financial policy regimes.

However, the emerging coordination of macroeconomic policies, principally trade and financial policies, is currently dominated by the multilateral trade and financial institutions, namely the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank instead of the UN-led follow-up mechanisms. As far as its direction and nature are concerned, the concept of policy coherence is incongruent with internationally agreed commitments, particularly with the Beijing Platform for Action and the MDGs. This state of affairs can further limit the sovereignty of governments in formulating and implementing domestic policies and strategies of their own that would put people at the center of the development process.

Multilevel efforts and institutional mechanisms are required to reorient the mandate for policy coherence toward UN processes and in support of the human development framework. Three major areas are discussed in the present study. First, policy coherence cannot be achieved if it is not tackled at both the national and international levels. Key mechanisms that help policy-makers respond to this challenge are gender impact assessment of financial, trade and investment policies and gender mainstreaming in governmental and international bodies. Second, the current dominant role of the WTO and the Bretton Woods Institutions in global economic decision-making can only be changed by both strengthening and gender-mainstreaming the United Nations, by restructuring the Bretton Woods Institutions, particularly their decision-making processes and voting rules, and by ensuring that the voice of vulnerable groups, and in particular women's groups, is heard in connection with WTO negotiations and agreements. Third, UN-led follow-up processes need to be shaped in such a way that they offer an adequate framework to address people-centered policy coherence. The recently presented report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization as well as its follow-up mechanism, both of which are valuable in their own right, can help strengthen especially the financing for development processes in such a way that they adequately address the objectives stated at the Monterrey conference.

## List of Acronyms

AoA	Agreement on Agriculture (WTO)
BFA	Beijing Platform for Action
BWI	Bretton Woods Institutions
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FES	Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services (WTO)
ICFD	United Nations International Conference on Financing for Development
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
ILO	International Labour Organization
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
NGOs	Nongovernmental Organizations
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PRSPs	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
TRIMS	Trade-Related Investment Measures (WTO)
TRIPS	Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (WTO)
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNIFEM	United Nations Development Fund for Women
WB	World Bank
WSSD	World Summit on Social Development
WTO	World Trade Organization

## 2. Focus on 2005<sup>1</sup>

At the official presentation of the report of the *World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization* at the United Nations General Assembly last September 20, 2004, speakers from around the world called for a new global economic order that would set the stage for worldwide prosperity together with social justice. President Benjamin William Mkapa of Tanzania argued that the “deep-seated and persistent imbalances in the current workings of the global economy are ethically unacceptable, politically unsustainable, and are a seedbed of global insecurity” (Mkapa quoted in ILO 2004b: 2). President Tarja Halonen of Finland called for pursuit of the goal of decent work for all women and men (ILO 2004b: 3). Their statements demonstrate the urgent need to address the existing inequalities that are hampering the attainment of a fair and more equitable world. One important step toward meeting this challenge is to enhance the coherence of international and national policies in such a way that they support internationally agreed development goals, especially women’s empowerment, gender equality, labor rights, social inclusion and poverty eradication.

**The year 2005 presents a unique opportunity to continue the momentum recently developed through participation of UNCTAD XI and civil society in WTO meetings and to mobilize political and public support for greater policy coherence for development.**

The year 2005 presents a unique opportunity to continue the momentum recently developed through participation of UNCTAD XI and civil society in WTO meetings and to mobilize political and public support for greater policy coherence for development. Governments, international organizations, civil society and other stakeholders are set to come together to assess progress in meeting the development objectives involved in the follow-up processes, including Beijing+10, Copenhagen+10 and the high-level dialogue on Financing for Development. In addition, the UN General Assembly will review the Millennium Declaration. One feature common to all these follow-up processes is the monitoring of progress toward the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), social development for all, and promotion of gender equality and women’s empowerment. The year 2005 is an important crossroads for international trade negotiations as well as, especially, for the WTO Doha Round. Member countries will attempt to reach agreements on agricultural and nonagricultural market access, development issues, trade facilitation, and services<sup>2</sup>. Several governments and civil society organizations have voiced increasing concerns regarding the effects of the expanded mandate of the WTO on national policy and economic sovereignty (see Section 4.3 of this paper) and the distributional and gender implications of the WTO agreements. Hence there is a need to ensure that international trade and financial policies fully support and address the internationally agreed commitments toward

1 We thank Frank Schroeder, FES, New York Office, Sigrid Skarpelis-Sperk, SPD Member of the German Parliament, and Juergen Stetten, FES, Berlin Headquarters for their useful comments on an earlier draft of this study. We would also like to thank the participants of workshops in Geneva and Berlin in October 2004 for valuable discussions on the issue of how to engender policy coherence.

2 After the collapse of the trade talks in Cancún in September 2003, WTO member states agreed on a negotiating agreement package in July 2004, which resulted basically in a renewal of the WTO trade negotiations. The deadline for concluding the WTO trade negotiations is December 2005 (ICTSD 2004; Third World Network 2004).



sustainable, human development. Both the major UN follow-up processes and the WTO trade negotiations in the Doha round make 2005 a year of important milestone decisions on policy coherence for development.

The first part of the study will argue that a people-centered concept of policy coherence is needed to ensure that the international trade and financial systems fully support, and operate in accordance with, the agreed UN commitments, especially as regards gender equality and women's empowerment. This section also demonstrates that this horizontal approach toward policy coherence requires a better understanding of the vertical linkages between the macroeconomic environment created by multilateral trade and investment agreements and microlevel adjustments and changes, particularly those experienced by women.

The second part of the study will critically examine, from a gender perspective, the extent to which the UN social and human development frameworks, including Financing for Development (FfD), provide an adequate framework for addressing the above concerns. The ICFfD outcome document, known as the *Monterrey Consensus*, is in effect a compact among the UN member countries aimed at ensuring that the leading actions called for in its several chapters on financing for development are mutually consistent and reinforcing<sup>3</sup>.

#### **Box 1: International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey**

It was in March 2002 that the International Conference on Financing for Development was held in Monterrey, Mexico. The Conference adopted the 'Monterrey Consensus,' with its key commitment to enhancing the policy coherence of the international monetary, financial and trading system.

Six themes were agreed upon:

1. Mobilizing domestic financial resources for development
2. Mobilizing international resources for development: FDI and other private flows
3. International trade as an engine for development
4. Increasing international financial and technical cooperation for development
5. External debt
6. Addressing systematic issues: enhancing the coherence and consistency of the international monetary, financial and trading systems in support of development United Nations 2002

<sup>3</sup> At the summit plenary of the conference, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan gave an optimistic assessment in his Outcome Report, but also acknowledged many of the criticisms leveled at the Monterrey Consensus, (paragraphs 36 and 37). In his view, some of the "gaps" in the final outcome involved an inadequate discussion of a) remedies for the widening inequalities between the rich and the poor in the context of market-driven globalization, b) "social issues" such as gender mainstreaming, the financing of social programs, c) global public goods and their financing via possible new forms of taxation, and d) full external debt cancellation for low-income countries.

**The August 2004 report of the UN Secretary-General recognizes the uneven progress toward achieving the goals set out in the Monterrey Consensus and the essential need “to strengthen implementation efforts in all areas of the Consensus: national, international and systemic.”**

However, the leading actions that were recommended in the Monterrey Consensus as “sound” macroeconomic policies are commonly associated with the Washington Consensus and are based on the premise that financial liberalization and privatization, fiscal prudence, trade and capital account liberalization enhance economic growth (Floro et al 2003). To date, the implementation of these leading actions has been uneven and inadequate in coordinating development efforts among the stakeholders. The August 2004 report of the UN Secretary-General recognizes the uneven progress toward achieving the goals set out in the Monterrey Consensus and the essential need “to strengthen implementation efforts in all areas of the Consensus: national, international and systemic” (United Nations 2004d: 2). Moreover, as this study will demonstrate, the emerging coordination of macroeconomic policies, principally trade and financial policies, is dominated by the multi-lateral trade and financial institutions, namely the World Trade Organization (WTO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB) instead of the UN-led follow-up mechanisms. Critical gender and governance concerns as well as any adverse distributive consequences are ignored in the emerging process of policy coherence, making it extremely difficult for coordinated macroeconomic policies to serve the goal of sustainable, human development.



# 3 The challenges involved in engendering policy coherence for development

## 3.1 Reclaiming the concept

The current nature and direction of policy coherence is being shaped by the discussions within international trade and financial institutions. The evolving coherence of trade and financial policy is part of the Doha Ministerial Declaration, which stressed the need for joint measures of the WTO and the Bretton Woods Institutions to respond to a rapidly changing international environment (WTO 2001: paragraph 5; see also Nageer 2004; Bretton Woods Project 2003). This agreement has been strongly criticized by civil society organizations for strengthening the harmonization of national policies under the prevailing international neoliberal order (Civil Society Forum 2004). Efforts to systematize policies and agreements in IMF, World Bank and WTO discussions and negotiations have created even greater pressure for developing countries to adopt market liberalization, deregulation and privatization (Caliari 2004; Nageer 2004). For example, the IMF and the World Bank are increasingly involved in trade and trade-related policies in support of the WTO, providing trade-related technical assistance, research and training activities and ex ante mechanisms such as country performance assessments prior to loan approval or grant disbursement (Williams and Caliari 2004: 7).

This particular direction of policy coherence can further limit the sovereignty of governments in formulating and implementing domestic policies and strategies of their own that would put people at the center of the development process (see Section 4.2). It is also leading to a lack of congruence between the multilateral trade agreements and other agreements and internationally agreed commitments, particularly the Beijing Platform for Action and the MDGs. Although the founding principles of WTO, IMF and WB commit these institutions to work toward the attainment of people-centered goals, fundamental power asymmetries are being strengthened between the international institutions that deal with trade and finance and those that support human rights and the social content of development policies, leading to growing tensions and contradictions (World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization 2004: 113). An increasing number of studies show that economic policies and values that emphasize trade and financial liberalization and privatization above all else hamper social progress and work only to the benefit of certain countries and groups in societies. People's needs, and especially those of poor women – decent work, social protection and empowerment – are becoming subservient to or are derived from (market-driven) economic growth and financial policy objectives (World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization 2004: 112f). Macroeconomic policies and policy coherence need to be developed according to principles and frameworks that uphold people-centered development, human rights and social justice. They must guide economic decisions and actions that benefit all, particularly the most vulnerable groups (Ashoff 2002; UNIFEM et al 2004: 381; ICFTU 2004).

**The evolving coherence of trade and financial policy is part of the Doha Ministerial Declaration, which stressed the need for joint measures of the WTO and the Bretton Woods Institutions to respond to a rapidly changing international environment.**

## 3.2 Addressing the horizontal and vertical dimensions of policy coherence

### 3.2.1 *The horizontal dimension*

**Compartmentalization leads to incoherent policies not only at the national level but at the international level as well.**

A fair and balanced globalization requires the coordination of macroeconomic, trade and investment policies and multilateral agreements that serve to realize social and sustainable-development objectives as well as human rights standards contained in UN commitments (Deutscher Bundestag 2002). In many cases, negotiations between key international organizations focus on separate sectors such as trade, finances, health, social affairs and development assistance (World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization 2004: 78). This compartmentalization of institutional mandates reflects, to a large extent, a parallel situation faced by national governments, where there is often a lack of interdepartmental coordination geared to achieving development goals, since actions are taken exclusively in their respective spheres of governance (World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization 2004: 78, see Section 5.1). This compartmentalization leads to incoherent policies not only at the national level but at the international level as well. Economic and trade ministers commit themselves to trade liberalization in multilateral, regional and bilateral negotiations; at the same time, other government officials and representatives agree to norms and standards of human rights, environmental protection and the empowerment of women by signing legally binding and nonbinding conventions, resolutions and declarations (Walker 2004).

**Although WTO declarations do not explicitly refer to human rights, there is an implicit assumption that WTO rules must uphold the obligations of WTO member states.**

Given the broadening of the WTO agenda, which now encompasses services, intellectual property rights and investments, there is an urgent need to ensure that UN agreements serve as the guiding principles in regard to the formulation and implementation of WTO rules (Walker 2004: 321-323). Although WTO declarations do not explicitly refer to human rights, there is an implicit assumption that WTO rules must uphold the obligations of WTO member states, which include “universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion” (Art. 55 of the UN Charter). Given that all WTO members have ratified international human rights treaties and other UN agreements such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Beijing Platform for Action or the Millennium Declaration, respect for human rights, including the right to food security, decent work and gender equality, is not only a moral issue, it is a legal obligation as well (Walker 2004: 341; Zampetti 2004).

Identification of areas where policy coherence is lacking requires a better understanding of and focus on distributional and gender concerns. While studies have been published by economists with international bodies such as the World Bank and the IMF that argue empirically that trade liberalization promotes growth, development and poverty reduction, there are numerous studies which demonstrate that trade and investment policies do not yield gender-neutral results. Rather, the distribution of benefits and costs has been directly and indirectly biased against

poor women.<sup>4</sup> Whereas direct forms of discrimination include wage discrimination due to liberalization of trade and capital markets, indirect discrimination tends to be more obscure and more difficult to monitor and address.<sup>5</sup> Gender impact assessments of trade, investment and financial policies in this regard can serve as important tools in identifying critical, direct and indirect, gender impacts. Active participation of women's organizations in national, regional and international trade-related decision-making structures and processes are equally important in identifying and correcting the adverse effects of trade, financial and investment policies (Floro et al 2003: 35). This helps ensure that gender concerns are addressed during the formulation, implementation and evaluation stages of trade-related commitments and policies affecting capital flows.

### **Recommendation 1: Implement gender impact assessments of trade and financial policies in governmental and international bodies**

According to UNIFEM et al (2004: 380f), "gender, trade [as well as investment] impact assessments can be empowering mechanisms that help policy-makers respond to poor women's needs and facilitate human development and human rights." Therefore, gender policy impact assessments should be institutionalized in international and regional trade- and investment-related policy-making processes in order to reduce poverty and increase gender equality (UNIFEM 2004: 381). Active participation of women's organizations in gender impact assessments of macroeconomic policies and rules should be ensured.

Several examples are given below to illustrate the importance of policy coherence at the horizontal level. In the field of agriculture, lack of coherence is most obvious between the goal of trade liberalization – as formulated in the WTO Agreement on Agriculture – and food security as a core human right.<sup>6</sup> This lack of congruence is manifested by the fact that OECD countries spend about US \$300 billion annually in agricultural subsidies. Yet many OECD members have difficulties meeting their pledge to provide 0.7% of GDP in foreign assistance, which is required to reach the MDGs by 2015. Rural women are especially affected by imports of subsidized food and price dumping, which have endangered local economies and threatened the livelihood of small-scale farmers, especially women, and the food security of poor households (Young and Hoppe 2003). Substantial reductions in subsidies and improved market access are key elements of a policy coherence that serves the goals of food security and poverty reduction.<sup>7</sup>

Another area where coherence is lacking is trade in primary commodities. Developing countries, and especially Least Developed Countries (LDCs), are caught in a vicious cycle of heavy dependence on primary commodities, unstable and declining

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4 See for example, Berik 2000, Berik et al (2004), Kucera and Milberg (2000), Seguino (2000), Williams (2003) and Çagatay (2001), to name a few.

5 In general, indirect discrimination occurs when an apparently neutral measure leads "to unequal results, which can have the effect of petrifying inequality." (Walker 2004: 326).

6 This is reflected in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and in Article 14 of CEDAW, which stresses the specific role of women in attaining food security

7 At present, developing countries can provide support to small farmers to ensure food security by invoking Special and Different (S&D) treatment, especially green box exemptions (Zampetti 2004: 307). While there is certainly a need to further strengthen and broaden the WTO's S&D-treatment provisions, the key constraint to food security remains subsidies and unbalanced market access (see also Sections 2.2.1 and 3.2).

world prices for nonoil primary commodities, low levels of export revenues, low import capacities and unsustainable external debt (United Nations 2004e). A key precondition for reducing extreme poverty in developing countries is to break this chain and to formulate trade and monetary/financial policies more strategically, that is, in ways more consistent with national priorities and development objectives (UNCTAD 2003: 14). Declining commodity prices, short-term price fluctuations and the dwindling share of primary producers in the value chain have had, as many studies show, serious negative impacts on women (see for a general discussion Ul Haque 2004). Given the role of women in the reproduction process, these trends constitute a threat to food security as well. Enhancing policy coherence would therefore require closing an institutional gap in the current agendas of the WTO as well as the World Bank and the IMF that encourages commodity-based development and diversification (Ul Haque 2004, UNCTAD 2003: 9f). This can be accomplished by reestablishing gender-sensitive regional and national trade boards and supporting strategic planning initiatives of developing countries geared to more coordinated trade, domestic agricultural and industrial policies that ensure food security, poverty reduction and gender equality.

#### **Recommendation 2: Address the commodity problem from a gender perspective**

Gender issues and concerns should play a key role in the agenda and follow-up processes of the Global Partnership for Commodities headed by UNCTAD. In this regard, there is a need for gender mainstreaming and support for initiatives such as the reestablishment of regional and national trade boards that promote gender-equitable, agricultural and industrial development and diversification. There is also a need to assess agricultural and industrial policies that ensure food security and poverty reduction (FAO 2004).

#### **The current GATS agreement will further weaken the provision of essential public and social services in many countries.**

International trade and foreign investment in services is a third area where policy coherence is lacking. Studies show that the current GATS agreement, along with loan conditionalities, will further weaken the provision of essential public and social services in many countries, including developed countries with social welfare programs and developing countries that have adopted relevant measures as part of their PRSPs (see Section 4.1 below). Although GATS has not yet been implemented, impact studies indicate that liberalization of the services sector has especially negative implications for poor women as customers or users of these services, and as workers (Young and Hoppe 2003). Accompanied by fiscal austerity and foreign investment measures embodied in loan conditionalities and private-sector development strategies, GATS is likely to reduce access to social services thanks to its requirement of market-determined user fees. As water, utilities, healthcare, public transport and other public services become more expensive, poor women who lack the required purchasing power are likely to be marginalized and excluded. This will result in increased work burdens as women spend more labor time on survival and reproduction activities (ILO 1999; Young and Hoppe, 2003).

The public sector, including the care economy, has also been a major employer of women in many countries. In fact, in some countries the public sector has been the largest single employer of women, providing more gender-equal job oppor-

tunities and marked by lower gender-based wage and salary differentials than the private sector. Downsizing the public sector without comprehensive gender analysis can therefore undermine or reduce gender equity (ILO 2001, Hoeven and Hoppe 2004).

### *3.2.2 The vertical dimension*

Addressing policy coherence at the vertical level involves an examination of the vertical linkages between the macroeconomic environment created by international trade, investment and loan agreements and the adjustments and changes involved at the national, sectoral, household and individual levels. The need to enhance the coherence between national development strategies, particularly in developing countries, and global trade and financial processes was particularly stressed at the UNCTAD XI conference in Sao Paulo in July 2004. The following section will look into these critical linkages from a gender perspective. Using case studies, it will highlight the important distributional consequences and gendered outcomes of the current international trade and financial policy regimes.

# 4. Gender analysis of global macro-micro-linkages

## 4.1 Policy implementation and coherence

There is a dynamic interaction between policy coherence and policy implementation and the pattern of gender relations in social and economic life. A growing body of research by feminist economists shows how gender norms and patterns in social and economic life are transmitted through a variety of institutions, including markets, governments and the household.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, policy coherence and implementation can alter or reinforce prevailing gender relations and biases. For example, the processes of market expansion and deregulation have created new patterns of wealth and poverty. They have brought about changes in patterns of employment and labor allocation between paid and unpaid work, savings, and credit burdens among household members.

**Women experience poverty differently from the way men do because they typically have less control over resources.**

These changes have focused greater attention on the heightened vulnerability of poor households. They also emphasize the interconnections between gender, trade, finance and development, and especially gender-differentiated policy impacts. Women experience poverty differently from the way men do because they typically have less control over resources. As Çağatay (2001) puts it, macroeconomic policies are predicated on a set of distributive relations across different social groups, just as they entail distributive choices across different social groups. If this fundamental fact is not borne in mind, policy implementation and coherence may serve either to reinforce or to reduce these gender-based inequalities, which themselves in turn affect and hamper the success of policy reform or limit the benefits to poor households.

In recent decades, increasing numbers of women in LDCs have taken on the role of income earners and “breadwinners”. In fact, the increasing rates of women’s economic activity observed in several countries have been shadowed by declining rates for men. Increasingly, women in LDCs remain in the labor force throughout their childbearing years, finding ways to combine family responsibilities with market work (United Nations 2000).

In addition, women’s share of work in farming and in informal-sector small-scale and microenterprises has risen dramatically in many developing countries (Charmes 1998; Chen et al 1999; Carr et al 2000; Standing 1999). Increasing numbers of female household members are compelled to accept jobs under precarious conditions to compensate for the decline in real wages. The *UN World’s Women 2000: Trends and Statistics* report estimates that in the Philippines, Thailand and Bolivia 64%, 54% and 74%, resp., of the nonagricultural female labor

<sup>8</sup> See for example, Kabeer 2001, Floro, Çağatay et al 2003, Young and Hoppe 2003, Erturk and Darity 1995, Floro 1995 and Braunstein 2000.



force are active in the informal sector.<sup>9</sup> Although these numbers are largely rough estimates, several studies concur that informal-sector activities have been increasing due to many countries' preoccupation with inflation targeting and low emphasis on creation of decent jobs. Labor flexibility, in particular outsourcing and subcontracting among homebased women workers, have become prevalent.<sup>10</sup> Women have also taken on "nonstandard" forms of work such as part-time employment and temporary work, which tend to offer little or no job security or health benefits (ILO 2000). In developing countries in which social protection is either inadequate or nonexistent, workers are without means in between jobs. Until recently, multi-lateral policy negotiations and formulation of domestic economic and social policies have paid little attention to the increasing economic insecurity of farmers, informal workers and microentrepreneurs, particularly women.

Women also continue to be more vulnerable to poverty than men due to persistent gender inequalities in their control over property or earned income. A study of women farmers in Ghana by Date-Bah (1985), for example, shows how women's lack of access to credit and the generally poor system of public transportation have significantly impaired their earnings, and hence their means of survival. In Kenya, cattle and land assets, which women are excluded from inheriting or owning, are the main forms of capital accumulation that have provided access for men and effectively excluded women from access to credit, market opportunities and technological innovations (Ventura-Dias 1985). Resource allocation is often gender-biased both within households and in state and market institutions, making it harder for women to transform their capabilities into incomes or well-being. Ethnographic, feminist and household-economics research has demonstrated that resources are unequally shared within families in many parts of the developing world.<sup>11</sup>

The above discussion raises the question as to whether trade and financial policy reforms perpetuate, accentuate or erode existing gender inequalities. The answer is not immediately evident or measurable. Global trade and investment rules and accompanying national policy reforms affect not only the manner in which resources are allocated and production processes are organized; they also influence the institutions encompassing legal property rights, rules of behavior and norms. Changes in incomes and employment patterns have a major influence on the spheres of control and authority, access to and control over resources and decision-making roles among household members. For example, it has been argued that as agricultural market expansion and export promotion proceed, indigenous land tenure systems evolve from communal ownership to privatization of property rights that may bypass women farmers (Smith et al 1994). Studies conducted in several African countries show how market-liberalization-induced commercialization of a particular crop can lead to a situation in which women are forced to

**Until recently, multi-lateral policy negotiations and formulation of domestic economic and social policies have paid little attention to the increasing economic insecurity of farmers, informal workers and microentrepreneurs, particularly women.**

**Global trade and investment rules and accompanying national policy reforms affect not only the manner in which resources are allocated and production processes are organized; they also influence the institutions encompassing legal property rights, rules of behavior and norms.**

9 Data on Asia are prepared by Jacques Charmes as consultant to the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat. Data on Latin American are prepared by the Statistical Division of the United Nations Secretariat from statistics provided by the Statistical Division of the Economic Commission on Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).

10 See for example, Elson 1996, Beneria and Floro 2003; Balakrishnan and Huang 2002; Christensen 1988; Chen et al 1999.

11 See for example, Roldan 1987, Hoddinott and Haddad 1995; and Kabeer 2000.

cede their role in crop production (as decision-makers) to men (Webb 1989; Kumar 1994). When cocoa was promoted as an export crop in Nigeria, it became a men's crop as well. The same is true for irrigated rice in Zambia. Other village-level studies in Nigeria, Nepal and India show that agricultural commercialization has reduced women's share in income (Lipton and Longhurst 1989; Mook 1986; Ventura-Dias 1985).

**Even when new markets create opportunities, women are slow to take advantage of them, as they often lack access to credit, new technologies and knowledge of marketing.**

Export expansion may have potential benefits in terms of higher growth, increased employment and improved women's welfare. But this calls for an understanding of existing structural inequities, which may undermine rather than enable sustainable human development. Unregulated import liberalization, for instance, has threatened the livelihood of women working in formerly protected areas of the domestic economy. In many OECD countries, trade expansion with developing countries has resulted in declines in employment that disproportionately affect women (Kucera and Milberg 2000; Erturk and Darity 2000). Increased competition from subsidized food imports from the developed countries has also had the effect of displacing food producers in developing countries. According to Williams (2003), this has been the case for Kenyan women farmers. Increased food imports and dumping, coupled with increasing prices for farm inputs have left many female food producers worse off than they were in the early 1980s before structural adjustment. Although some rural women farmers who were integrated in village markets have managed to increase their incomes, others have not, particularly those who could not afford to buy modern inputs such as fertilizer. Thus, even when new markets create opportunities, women are slow to take advantage of them, as they often lack access to credit, new technologies and knowledge of marketing. The impact of these changes is likely to be more severe for women-headed households and for poor women. Lack of gender-sensitive data, particularly national, longitudinal data, unfortunately makes it difficult to ascertain the severity and magnitude of these displacement effects.

### **Recommendation 3: Address the lack of gender-related statistics**

Given the need for policy coherence a comprehensive implementation strategy on gender equality and gender equity, international organizations and governments must generate sex-disaggregated data and statistics that better reflect women's roles, concerns and priorities in all areas of the statistical system – social, demographic and particularly economic statistics. In particular, there is need to collect data and develop better measures of women's economic contributions, such as time-use data on unpaid work and more complete enumeration of women's work in the informal sector and home-based work. There is also need to develop the capacity to make effective use of the broad range of gender statistics in both global and national policy processes.

**The notion that men are breadwinners and that women earn supplementary incomes – even though the reality may be just the opposite – appears to influence formal credit allocation.**

Trade liberalization creates winners as well as losers; it tends to advantage large and medium producers as well those with access to productive resources, and to disadvantage smaller producers. Small farmers, especially women, often lack capital, new technologies and marketing know-how that are needed to participate in the market. Although there are numerous microfinance initiatives, women's lack of access to credit remains one of the key constraints that limit their performance in productive activities. Many poor women do not hold land rights and typically have lower earnings and are therefore unable to provide collateral. Even

when their earnings are the same as men's, women tend to face discriminatory practices on the part of many formal financial institutions. If nothing else, the notion that men are breadwinners and that women earn supplementary incomes – even though the reality may be just the opposite – appears to be pervasive in credit allocation.

## 4.2 Sovereignty in policy decision-making

Multilateral rules governing trade and movements of capital should provide developing countries with sovereignty in domestic policy-making, giving them the flexibility they need to formulate policy in accordance with a country's development priorities and objectives ("policy space"). The Spirit of Sao Paulo and the Sao Paulo Consensus emphasize that trade is simply a means to growth and development, not an end in itself. Hence it is important to pay attention to the "quality" of trade in terms of beneficial integration of developing countries into the global economy (UNCTAD 2004, UNCTAD 2004a). This implies that international rule-setting and policy negotiations, conceived broadly to include regional and inter-regional processes, should allow for diversity in economic institutions and structures, levels of market development and development priorities. It also suggests that rules governing policy regimes should take into account the fact that gender influences economic behavior, opportunities and constraints faced by agents. A gender lens puts into perspective the overarching purpose of all economic activity, including market activities, i.e. providing for human needs.

**Multilateral rules governing trade and movements of capital should provide developing countries with sovereignty in domestic policy-making, giving them the flexibility ("policy space") they need to formulate policy in accordance with their development priorities and objectives.**

### **Recommendation 4: Maintain and reestablish sovereignty in domestic policy-making**

Priorities for social and economic development need to be set and asserted by developing countries on their own, and there should be no risk that the WTO, and BWIs might challenge such domestic policy decisions. Essential public services such as healthcare, education and other basic public services especially relevant to women should not be subject to liberalization and privatization since they are of fundamental public interest.

Recent agreements, negotiations and agendas at the WTO ministerial meetings such as in Cancún, however, are extending their coverage beyond the confines of trade and into new areas of domestic, macroeconomic policy-making and social policy concerns. In addition, along with the World Bank and the IMF, the WTO is merging national and international policies without paying due heed to the differences between countries or what a specific policy approach may mean for critical areas such as agriculture, food and economic security and sustainable livelihoods.

Whether the outcomes and impacts of trade and financial policies on the well-being of members of households are negative or positive will depend largely on the context in which market opportunities are introduced. This refers to the broader economic and institutional environment of which the household (and its members) is part. A few illustrations will serve to demonstrate the significance of context for the nature of outcomes. Smith et al, (1994), in discussing the effects of agricultural commercialization in Nigeria, point to the importance of public transportation systems in lowering marketing costs and the key role played by availability of adequate government support such as provision of fertilizer subsidies in gaining

access to modern technology. The potential benefits of new agricultural technology have been undermined, however, by the weakened provision of these government services. Several studies, such as that of Lipton and Longhurst (1989), point to the dramatic growth of landless agricultural workers in Asia, Africa and Latin America. They are the least powerful and most economically disadvantaged groups, and they comprise the majority of the rural poor.<sup>12</sup> This group has grown in a climate of market liberalization and elimination of food subsidy programs, especially for those out of work. Difficulty in finding employment as well as limited access to resources have affected many women in particular. In a study of the effects of export promotion on women's time-use patterns, Floro (1992) found that rural women in landless Philippine households have difficulty finding wage employment as a result of a shift toward export cropping. Thus, although further research is needed, there are reasons to suspect that trade liberalization in predominantly agricultural economies may have jeopardized many poor women's livelihoods and well-being.

### 4.3. Narrowing channels for the multilateral trading system to affect human development

**In economies where self-employment or unpaid family work is prevalent, gender-based differences in resource control are likely to entail adverse consequences for women.**

The recent GATS, TRIMS and TRIPS negotiations explicitly link trade with protection of investment and intellectual property rights (Williams and Caliarì 2004). Liberalization of services impacts access to water, healthcare and electricity, which are essential for household maintenance and human survival. Intellectual property rights agreements such as that on trade-related intellectual property (TRIPS) have impacts on access to affordable medicines, which are critical for men's and women's health and morbidity. Due to their impact on technology transfer, they also have serious implications for traditional knowledge and long-term development. The recent WTO negotiations in these areas will commit member countries to making specific policy choices on services, investment and intellectual property. In economies where self-employment or unpaid family work are prevalent, gender-based differences in resource control are likely to entail adverse consequences for women. The impact of trade liberalization will be mediated by what happens to common property resources and gender access to assets within poor and rural households. If WTO agreements reduce or eliminate restrictions on imports using techniques that harm the environment, trade liberalization is likely to lead to environmental degradation and erosion of common property resources.<sup>13</sup> This will adversely affect health conditions as well as the livelihoods of women and men.

A review of case studies provides some illustrations of the transformation in women's and men's roles and experiences that occurs in connection with the expansion and deregulation of markets for goods, services, capital and intellectual property. Since the mid-1980s, markets have become increasingly volatile for

<sup>12</sup> There have been some limited, systematic studies on the proportion of rural, landless households which are female-headed (de facto or de jure), particularly in Asia.

<sup>13</sup> Imports using techniques that harm the environment, such as air-polluting electricity generators or capital equipment that discharge toxic or hazardous materials into rivers or nearby forests, are likely to be affected in these negotiations.

several major export commodities of developing countries, including cotton, sugar, cocoa and rubber. Deteriorating terms of trade have serious implications for human development: reduced employment, wages, incomes, economic security and well-being. The recent Cotton Initiative proposed by West and Central African countries called for the elimination of subsidies by industrialized countries, primarily the US, in order to ensure that the cotton market would be open to African and other farmers (Williams 2004). The prices of major export commodities of developing countries, e.g. cotton, have declined by approximately 54 percent since the mid-1990s.<sup>14</sup> Subsidies provided by developed countries to their cotton producers had led to an increase in supply and thus to lower cotton prices in the world market. According to Oxfam (2002), US cotton subsidies led to the loss of \$300 million in potential revenue to sub-Saharan Africa in 2001–2002 (see also Sections 3.2.1 and Recommendation 2).

The reduction or elimination of tariff and nontariff barriers in nonagricultural, manufactured goods has also been associated with declining industrial output in some developing countries. The expansion of WTO trade negotiations and multilateral trade rules into domestic policy areas have made it more difficult for countries to diversify and develop their domestic industries in the future. A recent study of trade in sub-Saharan Africa found that partial liberalization, while it yielded insignificant increases in market access (due to erosion of preferences), has led to a contraction of industrial output and a shifting of resources (increased specialization) into the production of agricultural commodities such as grains, sugar and cotton (Williams 2004).

It has been argued that trade liberalization has substantial benefits for women workers, particularly in Taiwan, Bangladesh, China, India and Korea, because of a rise in women's share of paid employment in the export sector. This has served to narrow the gender gap in employment and wages. But even in these economies, there are reasons to be cautious given the working conditions and the modalities under which the increase in women's paid employment has taken place. Çağatay (2001) and Erturk and Çağatay (2004) mention four major areas of concern. First, trade and market liberalization creates 'winners' and 'losers' among women, even if there is a net gain in women's employment compared to men. There is also a lack of assistance programs, e.g. retraining and compensation schemes, for people who have lost their jobs. Second, working conditions such as job security, health and occupational safety and pay may not improve for women as they make relative gains in employment; indeed, they may deteriorate under the pressure of international competition. Third, feminization of employment may be a temporary phenomenon, one that could be reversed at later stages of export promotion. Berik's (2000) study of the Taiwanese manufacturing sector, for example, shows the effect of industrial restructuring as Taiwan moves from light manufactured exports to machinery and transportation-related exports. This has resulted in a decline in women's employment opportunities relative to men's and a shift from wage to salaried employment. Even in countries where women's employment has

**The reduction or elimination of tariff and nontariff barriers in nonagricultural, manufactured goods has also been associated with declining industrial output in some developing countries.**

<sup>14</sup> Part of the commodity price decline can be traced back to the subsidy practices of the US, which in 2002 spent \$3.9 billion on subsidies to its cotton farmers, an amount twice the level of 1992.



increased, such as those Asian countries that relied heavily on female labor for export-led industrialization, the gender wage gap has not diminished, and in some cases it has even widened (Seguino 2000). Berik, Rodgers, and Zveglich' (2004) study on Taiwan and Korea explores how competition from international trade affects gender wage discrimination. The results for Taiwan and Korea suggest that competition from foreign trade in concentrated industries is positively linked with wage discrimination against women. This suggests that even if trade liberalization enhances women's employment opportunities, their 'competitive advantage' as workers remains rooted in lower pay and poorer working conditions. In fact, as Braunstein and Epstein's (2002) study on China's export-processing zones demonstrates, trade and investment liberalization provides strong incentives to keep women's relative wages low in order to ensure that the country remains competitive and attracts foreign investment.

Finally, market liberalization policies can further weaken rights of vulnerable workers, including subcontracted/homebased workers. Labor market deregulation has been justified in the name of international competitiveness as illustrated by the case of Ecuador. Rapid integration of Ecuador's economy into the global market through trade and financial market liberalization has meant that an increasing share of its productive sectors is in need of a more flexible labor force that can be redeployed quickly during periods of expansion, and can be kept "at arms length" at little or no cost during periods of slump (Floro 1992; Beneria and Floro 2003). The reforms initiated by IMF-World Bank in Ecuador during the 1980s brought about greater labor market flexibility, reducing mandatory employment stability in all activities, introducing wage-setting at market-determined levels, and abolishing the obligation of firms to pay workers on strike. Additional measures aimed at increasing labor flexibility and export competitiveness were incorporated in the Ecuador labor code during the early 1990s.<sup>15</sup>

**Growing informalization of employment can be viewed as part of the dramatic transformation of employment patterns under neoliberal policy regimes. The result has been the erosion of workers' rights and bargaining power relative to capital.**

In other parts of the developing world, medium and large firms have developed, directly or indirectly, increased links to informalized production through outsourcing and subcontracting. This trend has been examined by several studies on the cases of Thailand and the Philippines as well as Latin America (Boonmathya et al 1999; Balakrishnan and Huang 2002; Prugl 1990; Pérez-Sainz 2000; Todaro and Yanez 2004). The growing informalization of employment can be viewed as part of the dramatic transformation of employment patterns under neoliberal policy regimes. The result has been the erosion of workers' rights and bargaining power relative to capital. Informal workers, particularly subcontracted persons and homeworkers, have been forced to accept low piece wage rates and to work without benefits and protection.

Using sample survey data on urban poor households, Beneria and Floro (2003) show that among those employed, roughly 95% of workers in Bolivia and 79% of persons employed in Ecuador have moderately or highly precarious jobs; women

<sup>15</sup> Among the measures adopted were the use of temporary, part-time, seasonal and hourly contracts and the replacement of indefinite labor contracts with fixed-term contracts. The aim of these hiring schemes was to avoid any increases in a firm's core or regular personnel payroll. At the same time, reforms increased restrictions on the right to strike, collective bargaining and the organization of workers. Only one union is permitted in public-sector workplaces, and the number of workers necessary to form a union has been doubled (CELA-PUCE 2002).



tend to be overrepresented, a fact that points to their greater vulnerability. Work arrangements for many workers also reflect their movement between the formal and informal sectors of the economy. Given the unsteady and irregular character of many work contracts or microenterprises, it is not surprising that the incomes of these workers vary considerably.

Any assessment of the impact of market liberalization policy regimes on gender equality must look at their impact not only on women's livelihoods and work conditions but also on the unpaid care economy. Using time-use data, researchers have observed that increases in women's labor force participation are not accompanied by a commensurate reduction in their unpaid domestic work, as men have been reluctant to pick up the slack (UNDP 1995, Floro 1995; Pichetpongsa 2004, Hirway 2002; Floro and Miles 2002). The findings of feminist studies on household strategies during economic crisis show that intensification of work has been an important coping mechanism for many women.<sup>16</sup> In a recent study of home-based workers, Pichetpongsa (2004) examines their time-use patterns using the 2002 sample survey data on Thailand households in low-income areas of Bangkok; the results indicate that employment in the informal sector has meant longer working hours for women compared to men and yet women still earn less than men. Pichetpongsa's (2004) study also shows that women workers tend to have lower quality of life than men workers, both being money-poor and time-poor. His study relates these gender differences in quality of life to the gender norms that dictate the household division of labor as well as to the effect of the market liberalization policies that precipitated the financial crisis.<sup>17</sup> The study emphasizes the important point that there are not only winners and losers in market liberalization policy regimes, but that also, gender inequalities being multidimensional, there are even women who may gain in one dimension, such as employment or access to income, but lose in another, such as leisure and sleep.

Any assessment of multilateral trade, financial and investment agreements therefore calls for a more comprehensive evaluation focusing not only on increased market output or incomes but also on resulting changes in unpaid work burdens and quality of life. Paid employment and incomes alone do not adequately convey other important changes that may have resulted from the actions of both multilateral trade and financial institutions and governments. The continued invisibility of increased unpaid work, higher stress, and declines in women's capabilities are likely to give a false impression of the effectiveness of policies and development strategies. The social and economic costs borne by those who are marginalized in the process of increased market integration are great.

**Using time-use data, researchers have observed that increases in women's labor force participation are not accompanied by a commensurate reduction in their unpaid domestic work, as men have been reluctant to pick up the slack.**

<sup>16</sup> Studies on homeworking and informal sector activities show a high incidence among women workers in Bangladesh, Mexico, United States, and Spain who combine market work with domestic, reproductive activities such as cleaning, cooking and child care (Hossain 1988; Roldan 1988; Benton 1989).

<sup>17</sup> With the closing of numerous factories in Thailand following the 1998-99 economic crisis, thousands of laid-off workers entered the informal sector, particularly as homebased workers. Women workers especially found it necessary to combine both paid market work and unpaid domestic work, which led to a higher incidence of time and work intensity.

## 4.4 Services and investment: Questioning the neoliberal approach to “coherence”

Over the years, services such as essential social and public services (water, health-care and education, for example) as well as traditional services such as financial and professional services, have become a growing part of international trade. According to a study prepared for the UNCTAD XI conference in Sao Paulo, the export of services is responsible for some of the biggest gains from trade: “Services now account for about 50% of GDP in developing countries as a whole (vs. 68% in the developed world), trade in services represents 16% of all their trade and 23% of their share of global services exports. Services now generate about half of all jobs in the formal sector” (Meltzer 2004: 14).

**The need for gender budget analysis is even more urgent in view of the fact that higher costs and reduced access to privatized and liberalized social and basic services such as water and healthcare are likely to have major impacts on women.**

The GATS will provide the legal framework for trade in services, one designed to cover a range of areas including investment, financial services, communications, transportation, education, energy, water and movement of persons. Negotiations regarding the GATS call for progressive liberalization of regulations that impede trade and investment in services. At recent WTO ministerial meetings, many civil society organizations have questioned the push under the GATS negotiations to liberalize basic social services such as water, sanitation, electricity, health and education, which will have tremendous social and equity implications. The need for gender budget analysis is even more urgent in view of the fact that higher costs and reduced access to privatized and liberalized social and basic services such as water and healthcare are likely to have major impacts on women.

### Box 2: Gender budgets

Gender budget initiatives address the gap between policy commitments to gender equality objectives and the allocation of financial resources. Their aim is to promote greater accountability for public resources especially for women, without producing a separate budget for women. They provide important mechanisms to empirically examine the following: What impact does this fiscal measure have on gender equality? Does it reduce gender inequality; increase it; or leave it unchanged? Gender budget initiatives aim to give an overview of both the impact of the total budget on gender equality objectives and the impacts of specific programs and sectors on gender equality (Elson 2002).

Evidence from Cochabamba, Bolivia, shows that privatization dramatically increases the cost of water and reduces the access to it of a majority of the poor in the area. The imposition of market-based user fees in cost recovery programs established in India and South Africa has led to the poor not having access to essential water services (Williams 2003, UNIFEM 2000). In Kwa-Zulu Natal, South Africa, lack of access to safe drinking water has been implicated in the outbreak of cholera (Williams and Caliarì 2004, Williams 2003).

### **Recommendation 5: Implement gender budget analysis and ensure provision of and access to essential public services**

There is need for governments and international organizations to support provision of and access to essential public services as a universal obligation of all governments. This can be achieved by 'carving out' or protecting essential services and by supporting the incorporation of gender perspectives into budget processes. The latter can benefit from gender experts in other countries that have already initiated gender budgets.

Several developing countries are seeking the right to regulate services in order to be able to meet national development policy objectives. Challenges have also been made to the dominant role of financial and commercial interests that underlie many international trade and financial agreements, and there have been calls to place the issue of the temporary movement of natural persons on the agenda with a view to correcting the current imbalance between the global movement of capital and labor. LDCs have also called for the provision of emergency safeguards, especially the establishment of a process for addressing 'material injury' to domestic service providers resulting from market liberalization.

Intellectual property rights agreements such as that on trade-related intellectual property (TRIPS) can seriously affect the use of traditional knowledge, the pace of technology transfer and access to affordable medicines. It is within this context that the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and public health affirms the right of developing countries to interpret the TRIPS agreement from a public health perspective.<sup>18</sup> But the recent multilateral trade-related negotiations under the WTO as well as IMF-WB loan agreements have explicitly linked trade with the protection of foreign capital and intellectual property rights. The TRIMs agreement, for example, attempts to eliminate trade-distorting investment measures among WTO members. Of critical importance is the push for liberalization of financial services, which is likely to have distributional consequences in both developed and developing countries. There is also a need for critical scrutiny of the gender dimensions of such negotiations (Kucera 2001, Young 2003). Likewise, the Bretton Woods Institutions have used a variety of mechanisms and instruments to reinforce trade and investment links and promote investment and capital market liberalization (Williams 2004).<sup>19</sup>

These also limit the ability of host countries to direct foreign investment in such a way as to contribute to their development processes. Policies such as provision of special credits to domestic firms aimed at enhancing their capacity to develop or absorb new technology, or restricting entry to certain segments of the economy in order to incubate domestic firms before they are exposed to international competition have been the cornerstone of success for a number of countries that have

**Of critical importance is the push for liberalization of financial services, which is likely to have distributional consequences in both developed and developing countries.**

<sup>18</sup> The Doha declaration also explicitly recognizes the right of countries to grant compulsory licenses and determine the criteria for their issuance. By recognizing that these rights are subservient to public health concerns, it paves the way for interpretations of the TRIPS agreement that are more supportive of public health concerns.

<sup>19</sup> These include loan conditionalities, trade-related technical assistance, private-sector development strategies, and investment climate assessments e.g. 'Doing Business' reports, and Foreign Investor Advisory Services. These investment-related agreements also argue for the removal of performance requirements with regard to foreign investment, e.g. local content.

been able to harness FDI to their development advantage. Close management of FDI, for example, was part of the overall industrial policy approach of the East Asian countries during their export-led growth (Braunstein and Epstein 2002). Japan, South Korea and Taiwan developed legislation and mechanisms that enable them to steer foreign investment into sectors that were considered desirable, to ensure technology transfer at reasonable costs, and to prevent excessive repatriation of profits (Chang and Grabel 2004).

The approach used by the WTO and the Bretton Woods Institutions to coordinate trade and financial policies on the basis of the neoliberal paradigm ignores the reality of foreign direct investment and other capital flows and their gender implications. Although net private capital flows to developing countries grew in 2003 by more than 70 billion dollars (UN 2004d: 6), the bulk of these funds remains highly concentrated in the larger, emerging market economies.<sup>20</sup> In fact, the developing countries experienced negative net financial transfers of close to \$250 billion in 2003, according to the recent August 2004 Report of the UN Secretary General. This is highly disappointing given that the majority of developing countries have heeded policy advice to create a “stable business environment” and adopt “sound” macroeconomic policies. Yet the policies adopted to attract foreign capital have had adverse effects on the more vulnerable segments of the population (Floro et al 2003; Çagatay 2001; Braunstein 2003; Braunstein and Epstein 2002).

**Even though the view that concessions on labor standards are conducive to attracting foreign direct investment has little empirical support, it appears to be widely held by governments.**

For instance, an increasing number of developing countries have improved physical infrastructure in areas such as transportation, energy and telecommunications that are favored by foreign investors and multinational firms. This, along with tax concessions to foreign investors, has affected the allocation of public finances. The consequent reductions in tax revenues often lead to inadequate public expenditures on services such as healthcare, sanitation, and disposal management. These have serious, gender-asymmetric effects, especially in terms of women’s unpaid work and human development, which have been documented (Floro 2001; Çagatay and Erturk 2003).

Tacit endorsement of global subcontracting work chains and relaxation of labor laws are among the policy initiatives undertaken by developing country governments to attract foreign capital. This has important gender implications as well, since the majority of industries and enterprises, especially in subcontracting work chains – as has been pointed out in case studies – generally employ women. Even though the view that concessions on labor standards are conducive to attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) has little empirical support, it appears to be widely held by governments.

<sup>20</sup> The ten largest recipient countries account for three fourths of total FDI inflows to developing countries, with China alone accounting for nearly one third of the total.

### Recommendation 6: Promote social standards

Social standards, and in particular comprehensive labor standards, are means of addressing the challenging task of protecting people, especially women and children, from having to bear the 'social costs' of globalization. In keeping with the International Labour Organization's (ILO) "fundamental rights at work" and the ILO Convention on Homework (1996), protection of workers' rights includes freedom of association, for homebased and temporary workers as well as for core workers, recognition of the right to collective bargaining, elimination of forced labor, effective abolition of child work, and elimination of discrimination (Hoppe and Dolfsma 2004, ILO 1996). Their adoption and implementation are therefore recommended as a means of shaping the political and public debate on social standards. We recommend a gender-aware study of ways and means to effectively embed social standards in international agreements and policies in order for policy coherence to be able to promote human development.

At the same time, efforts are being undertaken in some developing countries to expand and improve the access to formal financial-sector services of small and medium-sized enterprises, microenterprises, the poor, women and rural populations such as global initiatives on microcredit<sup>21</sup>. Yet these efforts have to recognize other gender dimensions of finance, including savings mobilization (Seguino and Floro 2003, Floro 2001, Nguanbanchong 2004). Furthermore, potential gains for the poor and women from microfinance initiatives are being undermined by macroeconomic policies that encourage informalization of employment and increased income insecurity.

A recent study by Floro and Messier 2004 empirically examines the interconnection between microcredit and job precariousness and income volatility. Based on a sample survey of households in urban, low-income communities of Ecuador, their findings suggest that an unsteady flow of earnings has resulted in a reallocation of credit for consumption-smoothing purposes rather than into businesses. The study also finds a significant gender gap in debt leverage ratios among worker-borrowers in the sample, with women having a higher debt service burden ratio than men borrowers. The study suggests the need to address the source of this economic vulnerability, namely informalization of employment and growth of job precariousness in the context of market liberalization.

Both the Monterrey Consensus and the emerging policy coherence in the negotiations and agreements of WTO, IMF and WB have failed to induce governments to protect the rights of their worker citizens, especially those of women workers. The current economic environment has made it even more imperative that stable employment generation and social protection be given higher priority in policy coherence and implementation. It would be necessary to implement gender-sensitive rules designed to guide employment practices of firms and employers as well as the 1996 ILO Convention on Homework, which is geared to protection of workers' rights and decent work.

**Potential gains for the poor and women from microfinance initiatives are being undermined by macroeconomic policies that encourage informalization of employment and increased income insecurity.**

**The current economic environment has made it even more imperative that stable employment generation and social protection be given higher priority in policy coherence and implementation.**

<sup>21</sup> International cooperation on microcredit initiatives is underway in anticipation of the International Year of Microcredit. The G-8 countries announced in June 2004 that they will work together with the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor, the UN Capital Development Fund and organizations of the UN system in preparing a global market-based finance initiative to stimulate sustainable, pro-poor financial sectors.

# 5. Policy recommendations in global governance processes

## 5.1 Addressing policy coherence at the national level

**Policy coherence “that starts at home” requires strong interdepartmental coordination at the national (or regional) level before government representatives define their countries’ positions in trade, foreign affairs or social development at the international level.**

Policy coherence cannot be achieved without addressing the issue at both the national and the international levels. The former needs to be addressed urgently in order to avoid exporting policy incoherence to international negotiations and discussions. For example, lack of policy coherence in developed countries has set the stage for subsidies in agriculture in national and regional trade policies which are not consistent with internationally agreed development goals like food security or women’s empowerment (see Section 3.2.1). Another example is a lack of impact studies at the national (and international) level – useful instruments in monitoring the social and gender-related implications of economic, financial and trade policies (see Recommendation 1). Policy coherence “that starts at home” requires strong interdepartmental coordination at the national (or regional) level before government representatives define their countries’ positions in trade, foreign affairs or social development at the international level.<sup>22</sup> In addition, coherence-related dialogue between various ministries needs to be intensified, and available but scattered information should be shared and used more systematically (Ashoff 2002: 3). Given that some policies, including those pertaining to agriculture and fisheries, are in the regional domain, greater policy coherence at the regional level needs to be aimed for as well (Ashoff 2002: 3).

### Recommendation 7: Scrutinize the link between PRSPs and macroeconomic policies

Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) need to be scrutinized critically from a social and gendered perspective, particularly with respect to their coherence (or lack of coherence) with market liberalization policies. There is also need to critically examine the BWIs’ performance on additional and nonparticipatory criteria that are more influential than the PRSPs in determining a government’s development strategy (for a general discussion on PRSPs, see: Platz and Schroeder 2004).

A key factor in implementing national impact studies is that governments be held accountable for policy coherence. Parliamentarians, labor unions, NGOs and women’s groups have frequently called attention to failed government policies and/or to emerging problems that are not being addressed. Ashoff (2002) correctly stresses that “greater policy coherence seen from the angle of development policy [...] requires special efforts to mobilize public support” (Ashoff 2002: 3, see Section 2).

<sup>22</sup> “Policy coherence starts at home!” as stated by Eveline Herfkens, UN Secretary-General’s Executive Coordinator for the MDG Campaign.



Complementary to the national level, parliamentarians, labor unions, women's groups and NGO's need to be linked more closely in structural terms with the international intergovernmental process because they play a central role in multi-constituency processes bearing on labor policy, social safety nets and employment (United Nations 2004a; ICFTU 2004). The July 2004 report of the UN Secretary-General's Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations – Civil Society Relations, "We the Peoples: Civil Society, the United Nations and Global Governance" ("Cardoso Report"), is a vital step toward strengthening the UN's engagement with civil society organizations, including women's organizations. It is important that women's groups and gender experts be actively involved in the process of institutionalizing the UN's interaction with civil society and in building new structures in the Partnerships Office that is set to be created by the Secretary-General (United Nations 2004c).

**Recommendation 8: More consultation and dialogue with poor women and other vulnerable groups in gender analysis/gender assessments of trade and finance**

Gender analysis should be undertaken by all stakeholders – governmental bodies, civil society and the private sector – in national and international debates on financing for development. There should be increased consultation and dialogue with poor women and other vulnerable groups to identify their needs and give a voice in key economic decisions. They should be actively involved in existing initiatives and discussions on proposals.

**Recommendation 9: Engender the UN follow-up processes, including the Cardoso report**

We recommend a more active participation of women's groups and gender experts in the follow-up processes to the Cardoso Report. In the long term, we need to strengthen broad-based participatory formulation and decision-making processes and to use instruments of gender-sensitive assessments and creation of gender desks. There is also a need for maintenance of gender-balanced representation and participation of women's groups and gender experts to help fill in organizational gaps in governments and international bodies.

Some countries are already undertaking substantial efforts to achieve policy coherence at the national level. In Sweden, for example, a coherent policy on globally equitable and sustainable development has been mandated by Government Bill 2002/3:122, which extends to all areas associated with trade, agriculture, the environment, security, migration and economic policy.<sup>23</sup> One key element of the Swedish policy coherence initiative is a multistakeholder approach that includes governmental, parliamentary and public discussions of global economic and social issues. Given the complex linkages between trade, financial and social policies, capacity building, information sharing and network building need to be strengthened along with collective action, especially among NGO advocacy groups and women's groups (Nageer 2004).

**The "Cardoso Report" is a vital step toward strengthening the UN's engagement with civil society organizations, including women's organizations.**

**One key element of the Swedish policy coherence initiative is a multi-stakeholder approach that includes governmental, parliamentary and public discussions of global economic and social issues.**

<sup>23</sup> The bill explicitly "lays a foundation for a coherent and consistent policy in order to contribute to equitable and sustainable development in the world."

See [http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/574/a/24520:\\_CfKYuyMZ-](http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/574/a/24520:_CfKYuyMZ-).

## 5.2 Restructuring institutions of global governance

The current, dominant role played by the WTO and the Bretton Woods Institutions in global economic decision-making can be changed only by holding governments accountable for their commitments to human rights as well as to the UN's internationally agreed development goals (Adaba 2004: 33) and by strengthening the United Nations and restructuring the Bretton Woods Institutions and the WTO.

The urgent need to restructure the institutions of global governance has been emphasized by the governments of several developing countries, some developed countries governments and numerous civil society organizations. Many have, for several reasons, expressed disappointment and even frustration with the results of both recent WTO ministerial meetings and FfD follow-up discussions (Williams and Caliarì 2004; Williams 2003; Women's Edge 2003).

First, the increase in financial flows has not been sufficient to ensure that the MDGs will be reached.<sup>24</sup> The positive moves on the part of LDCs to improve their domestic environment in preparation for increased financing for development have not been matched by similar efforts on the part of the developed countries (UN 2004d: 2). Any potential benefits of trade in agricultural, minerals and metals exports such as cotton and steel, for example, are being cancelled out by anti-dumping actions, subsidies, and even by the resurgence of voluntary export restraints by developed countries, particularly the US and the EU.

**Both the WTO and the Bretton Woods Institutions have centered their discourse on policy coherence on their own agenda instead of using the FfD follow-up processes to coordinate policies on trade and finances.**

Second, both the WTO and the Bretton Woods Institutions have centered their discourse on policy coherence on their own agenda instead of using the FfD follow-up processes to coordinate policies on trade and finances (see also Section 3.1).<sup>25</sup> The UN's aim was to have the Financing for Development follow-up mechanisms include dialogues among UN delegates, the business sector, civil society organizations and women's groups, thereby creating a more participatory forum for discussions on issues bearing on coherence and the context of the MDGs and other commitments. Many governments, civil society organizations and international agencies have raised questions and concerns about an emerging policy coherence that emphasizes trade and financial liberalization above all else.

Third, concerns have been raised by many civil society organizations regarding governance structures within the multilateral financial institutions. Furthermore, there is need for reform of the IMF and the World Bank as far as their voting structures and the composition of their executive boards are concerned. At present votes are apportioned in the BWIs in such a way as to ensure that industrial countries hold 62% of voting power at the IMF and 61% at the World Bank. It is especially noteworthy that the basic votes shared equally by all countries have fallen from a total of 11.3% to 2.1% (Schroeder and Adaba 2003: 4). Quotas thus have virtually become the main determinant of voting power, undercutting the participation of

<sup>24</sup> This was referred to in the UN Secretary-General's report as the Monterrey "development deficit."

<sup>25</sup> In 1995, trade and finance ministers adopted the 'Declaration for Achieving Coherence in Global Policy-making,' a document calling for increasing cooperation between the WTO and the BWIs, alongside the WTO Agreements. Subsequently, the WTO has signed cooperation agreements with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Since then, each of the BWIs has increased the emphasis on trade liberalization in their mandates and consequently expanded their focus on trade.

small countries (see the statement by Ariel Buira in FES 2003). Furthermore, the imbalanced composition of the executive boards of IMF and World Bank is also a key factor serving to place decisions in the hands of a small group of developed countries, a fact which makes it extremely difficult to adequately address the interests of developing countries and women citizens in connection with policies, strategies and plans of action. The composition of the executive boards is also imbalanced from a gender perspective; the World Bank's Executive Board has only one woman, the IMF's Executive Board has two women (out of twenty-four members) (Schroeder and Adaba 2003).<sup>26</sup>

Proposals on restructuring the institutions of global governance and "for setting up new world organizations now fill entire libraries" (Martens 2003: 31). These can be generally classified in three main categories.

The first set of proposals concerns the idea of a global democratic decision-making body for economic and social issues. Five formats are under discussion in this context (Martens 2003): a) creation of a new Economic and Social Security Council, b) enlargement of the Security Council's mandate in regard to economic, social, and environmental problems, c) enlargement of the G-8, and d) a proposal to have the General Assembly's General Committee serve as a high-level decision-making body on issues of global concern and e) upgrading of ECOSOC. As regards point e), one such proposal is that advanced by Schroeder and Adaba (2003). Their paper recommends that ECOSOC should appoint, from its membership, an ECOSOC executive or steering committee consisting of three or four countries from each geographical region. The committee's task would be to support the Council in all relevant social and economic areas like policy coherence, and in particular in the follow-up to the Monterrey Conference, including the preparations for the annual spring ECOSOC high-level dialogue with the Bretton Woods Institutions and the WTO (Schroeder and Adaba 2003).

**The first set of proposals concerns the idea of a global democratic decision-making body for economic and social issues.**

The second set of proposals concerns both democratization of the decision-making structures of IMF, World Bank and WTO and strengthening of the role played by developing countries in the WTO (see discussion above). The third set of proposals aims to increase the transparency of and civil society participation in international trade and financial institutions (Martens 2004: 31-35).<sup>27</sup> Most recently, the Canadian Prime Minister Paul Martin has recommended the creation of an informal "Leaders of G-20" in order to promote effective international collaboration on issues of global equity and democratic governance. It is important to ensure that this and other proposals maintain a clear link between the proposed body and the UN and that they support the UN leaders' summit process. Notwithstanding, it is also necessary to ensure that developing countries and the interests of women, workers and the poor are represented (CCIC 2004).

<sup>26</sup> This issue merits further discussion and is beyond the scope of this paper. Nevertheless, following Buira (FES 2003), we recommend that the BWIs: a) restructure their executive boards, b) revise their quota formulas, and c) restore basic votes to their original role, in order to rectify the current imbalances and to give adequate and due representation to developing countries (FES 2003).

<sup>27</sup> See Martens 2004 for a detailed discussion of the different proposals.

Given the strong concerns regarding the present state of WTO-IMF-WB policy coherence and pattern of global governance, the following section will examine the extent to which the UN-led follow-up processes offer an adequate framework to address the above concerns from a gender perspective.

#### **Recommendation 10: Link gender research and policy coherence**

There is a need to:

- a) strengthen broad-based participatory policy formulation, decision-making and rule-setting processes, including the development of policy coherence. It is essential to ensure the active participation of civil society, including women's groups, as well as full involvement of gender specialists;
- b) establish a strong link between gender research, policy formulation and policy coherence at the national, regional and international levels.

It will be argued in Section 6 that the recently presented report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization and its follow-up mechanism, which has value in its own right, can help strengthen the FfD follow-up efforts so that they adequately address the stated objectives of the ICFfD.<sup>28</sup> The report and its follow-up mechanism can also help reorient the coordination of macroeconomic policies, chiefly trade and financial policies, back to a more participatory, UN-led follow-up process. But there is also a need to ensure that these UN processes uphold the human and social development framework in shaping macroeconomic policies, including policy coherence.

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<sup>28</sup> The 2002 International Conference on Financing for Development acknowledged the need to enhance the policy coherence of the international monetary, financial and trading systems, and to ensure that they mobilize financial resources to support international commitments in regard to development goals, including the Millennium Declaration and agreements of previous UN summits on gender, social development and environment reached in the 1990s. However, the market-liberalization policies that underlie many of the actions recommended in the outcome document, the Monterrey Consensus, are in conflict with the stated objective of the conference concerning the promotion of "national and global economic systems based on the principles of justice, equity, democracy, participation, transparency, accountability and inclusion" (Floro et al 2003; Schroeder et al 2003).

# 6 Shaping the follow-up mechanism in 2005: Bringing the mandate for policy coherence to the UN process

The need to reorient the mandate on policy coherence and in support of the human development framework would require complementary efforts and institutional mechanisms that mobilize political and public support for sustainable, people-centered development. First, this would require the UN General Assembly, in coordination with civil society organizations, particularly women's groups, to take a stronger policy leadership role in macroeconomic and social policy issues so that all agencies are brought under its guidance and into line with the human rights framework. Of particular importance are efforts to integrate the WTO within the UN system on the basis of Articles 57, 58, 63 and 64 of the UN Charter (DESA/OESC 2004: 21; Martens 2004: 45f).

The October 2003 High-Level Dialogue on FfD and the 2004 ECOSOC meeting with international financial and trade institutions were important follow-up meetings of the Monterrey Conference that helped ensure that concrete steps and strategies are taken to meet the financial needs of internationally agreed commitments. To help strengthen the UN's mandate on developing policy coherence, and to ensure that WTO rules and agreements as well as the economic policies espoused by the international financial institutions enhance rather than undermine the UN's social mandate, it would be important to enlarge the annual high-level meetings of ECOSOC with the BWIs and the WTO (Schroeder and Adaba 2003).

Most important, efforts need to be undertaken to fully integrate gender issues and concerns in the follow-up mechanisms of FfD. Although women's groups and feminist economists were active in the FfD preparatory committee meetings, there was widespread disappointment, especially as regards the incoherence of the outcome document and the Monterrey Consensus, with the stated objectives of the conference, namely promotion of "national and global economic systems based on the principles of justice, equity, democracy, participation, transparency, accountability and inclusion" (United Nations 2002, para. 9). Although it mentions the goal of promoting women's empowerment and gender equality as an important objective, the Monterrey Consensus pays inadequate attention to how these and other development goals are to be achieved. This is reflected in the general paucity of concrete proposals and mechanisms that are specified within any given time frame (Floro et al 2003). It is therefore important that the FfD and other UN follow-up processes include gender-sensitive monitoring and assessment of multilateral trade negotiations, debt relief schemes, PRSPs, and loan negotiations. There is a need for gender mainstreaming in all UN follow-up processes as well as in decision-making processes at the BWIs and the WTO (United Nations 2004b).

**Although it mentions the goal of promoting women's empowerment and gender equality as an important objective, the Monterrey Consensus pays inadequate attention to how these and other development goals are to be achieved.**

**Recommendation 11: Gender mainstreaming of ECOSOC and UN task forces.**

In order to ensure that policy coherence fosters the achievement of internationally agreed goals and commitments embodied in the Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Declaration, the role of the UN needs to be strengthened and engendered, especially the current structures within the UN process. It is therefore recommended that gender mainstreaming be initiated or continued in all bodies of UN agencies, including UNDP, UNCTAD, ILO, FAO and ECOSOC. This is to ensure that gender issues and distributional and social concerns are adequately addressed in the discussions, including those of the special high-level meeting of ECOSOC.

**UNCTAD, the principal organ of the UN General Assembly that deals with trade, investment and development issues, can play an important role in developing a more gender-sensitive, people-centered concept of policy coherence.**

The interagency-based Women and Gender Equality Taskforce on Gender and FfD, particularly UNIFEM and DAW, has helped raised gender awareness throughout the FfD preparatory committee meetings and at the Monterrey conference. It is important that gender mainstreaming in UN bodies and agencies be enhanced and that the Task Force continues its active role in the FfD processes. Likewise, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Gender and Trade led by UNCTAD can play a pivotal role in ensuring that the gender dimensions of the trade agenda are addressed (UNCTAD 2004: 73). As the principal organ of the UN General Assembly that deals with trade, investment and development issues, UNCTAD – along with the ILO – can play an important role in developing a more gender-sensitive, people-centered concept of policy coherence (see Section 4.2).<sup>29</sup> UNCTAD, along with women’s groups and gender specialists, could also play a key role in raising the issue of policy space in trade and investment negotiations in a gender sensitive fashion. Trade rules as well as investment and loan agreements should “maintain the policy space for national governments [especially of developing countries] to promote and protect the human rights of their people.” (Walker 2004: 323; see also Recommendation 6 and 4).

In addition to FfD, it would be important in 2005 to mobilize political and public support for engendering policy coherence and macroeconomic policy in other UN processes. Macroeconomic and social policies need to be reviewed and altered so that they fully support the objectives of the Beijing Platform for Action, the Copenhagen Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. The 2005 review processes of the World Commission for Social Development, the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and the MDGs group are important in this regard.

Finally, the recommendations and follow-up processes of the recently presented report of the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization can help reorient the coordination of macroeconomic policies, principally trade and financial policies, back to the UN-led follow-up processes. Two aspects of the World Commission report are noteworthy. First, the World Commission recommends that the multilateral institutions undertake policy coherence initiatives to develop integrated policy proposals that balance social, economic and development

<sup>29</sup> The overall theme of the annual high-level meetings of ECOSOC with the BWIs and the WTO in 2004 was “Coherence, coordination and cooperation in the context of the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus,” with special focus on investment and trade, MDGs and debt sustainability. UNCTAD’s role in the policy coherence debate is illustrated by its participation in the Special High-level Meeting of the ECOSOC with the Bretton Woods Institutions and the WTO for the first time in 2004.



### **Recommendation 12: Gender mainstreaming of the Financing for Development follow-up processes**

The active role of women's groups is critical in raising gender concerns and addressing the major shortcomings of the Monterrey Consensus in key discussions and decision-making processes regarding financing for development. In this regard, it would be essential to facilitate and encourage the active participation and re-engagement of women's organizations as well as feminist economists. We also recommend that the UN and its agencies:

- a) regroup the "Interagency Network of Women and Gender Equality Taskforce on Gender and FfD" and that different UN agencies should provide adequate support to network's initiatives;
- b) strengthen the FfD by working with and/or consulting women's groups and gender specialists.

Getting governments and multilateral organizations to address critical gender issues and women's concerns will require an effective and broad-based participation of women's groups and gender specialists. It is therefore important that women's groups and feminists economists:

- a) actively participate in the initiative to bring forward the Financing for Development discussions in the various regions and countries;
- b) carry out a gender-sensitive review of the decision-making structures and policy-making bodies involved in carrying out the leading actions of the Monterrey Consensus;
- c) provide training among its members on economic issues and on feminist economics with a view to broader participation in dialogues with governments and international bodies;
- d) work toward broadening their membership, in particular by giving a voice to poor women in the rural and informal sectors; and
- e) provide support for gender impact assessment of policies concerning poor households in terms of employment, economic security and unpaid work burden.

### **Recommendation 13: Formulation of the follow-up mechanisms to the World Commission's report**

Active participation of women needs to be facilitated and promoted in developing and coordinating an effective follow-up to the report of the World Commission on Social Dimension of Globalization.

The role of women's groups and gender specialists is important especially in the context of:

- a) supporting the World Commission's proposal on policy coherence initiatives (PCIs) and in monitoring their results in regard to gender issues and concerns; and
- b) planning and implementing the multistakeholder dialogues and the Global Policy Forum to be set up by the ILO. Gender-related concerns with regard to employment and informal work (see Section 4.1) need to be addressed in particular.

concerns in particular areas. Cross-cutting issues such as employment creation, reduction of poverty, gender equality and the empowerment of women, protection of core labor rights, education, health, food security and human settlements are given high priority and importance (World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization 2004: 134-137). Second, the World Commission recommends that policy development dialogues and, as a second step, a global policy forum be established to serve as a broader platform for dialogues on the social dimension of globalization. A key theme for a macroeconomic dialogue is a global initiative for employment with special focus on women's employment and informal work.

An important process derived from the work of the World Commission is the so called “Helsinki Process on Globalization and Democracy.” This Helsinki Process is a joint initiative of the Finnish and Tanzanian governments that comprises three focus areas, including global problem-solving, a global economic agenda and human security. The aim of the group is specifically to start a process that contributes to implementing commitments of the global community (Helsinki Process Secretariat 2004). As with the Financing for Development follow-up processes, the active role of women’s groups is critical in raising gender concerns in key discussions and decision-making processes of the Helsinki Process.

## 7. Some final remarks

A fair and gender-balanced globalization requires the international trade and financial systems to fully support and operate in accordance with the agreed UN commitments, especially as regards gender equality and women's empowerment. In particular, macroeconomic policies and policy coherence need to be developed in accordance with principles and a framework that promote social protection, human rights and decent work for all, women and men. As Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva rightly asserts, "another globalization – one that is both socially fair and politically sustainable – must begin with the right of all to employment, to a job that dignifies the worker. Access to decent work is at the center of the first and foremost of the Millennium Goals: the reduction of poverty and hunger." (da Silva quoted in ILO 2004b). With this in mind, the year 2005 presents a unique opportunity to mobilize political will and public support for greater policy coherence that responds to people's needs, and especially poor women's needs – decent work, social protection and empowerment.

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