

Impact of Globalization on Women: A Conference Report

National Commission for Women, New Delhi, 17 September 2004

Abstract

The National Commission for Women organized a series of public hearings in different parts of the country on the situation of women, especially poor women, working in various sub-sectors of the informal economy. The hearings showed that even though globalization had provided new economic opportunities for most, women in the informal sectors (especially home-based workers) had been adversely affected.

The public hearings brought to light the large gap between the macro-level and the micro-level situation in India. Although at the macro-level various indicators show that globalization has been a successful strategy, at a micro level it has displaced a large number of people from their traditional occupations, creating considerable hardships. A more liberal trade policy has meant increased imports, leading to a consequent fall in prices of agricultural commodities etc. It has also meant loss of work due to growing competition and increasing mechanization. Although the problem is identifiable at the local level, the solution does not necessarily exist at this level. Often it is dependent on national/central level policy-making. The hardships faced by the poor have been further accentuated by factors such as lack of alternative skills, lack of other job opportunities; lack of welfare schemes and funds in the informal sector, and inadequate outreach of existing schemes. Add to this the poor implementation of labour laws, the low level of schooling, the lack of basic health services and an unresponsive administration, and we have all the factors that contribute to greater vulnerability and the perpetuation of poverty in future generations.

The complete lack of information on issues ranging from ignorance about workers' rights and welfare schemes to the different ways in which the impact of globalization has been experienced, was a common thread through the various discussions. It is crucial to generate greater awareness

among women regarding policies on social protection so that they can access the schemes and benefit by them.

Women are the first to be displaced when technology is introduced. This has been seen in the agricultural sector where the introduction of high yielding variety seeds has reduced women's traditional control and decision-making over seed management. In the construction industry too, where there has been a boom, workers are being retrenched and especially in jobs that have traditionally been done by women.

The opening up of the market has had an adverse impact on some of the traditional crafts sector in India. Carpet weavers and crafts persons who make gold jewellery have been affected in large numbers and lost out to competition from machine-made carpets and jewellery from other countries. The same situation has been reported from the northeastern states of India in the case of bamboo and cane workers. Lack of finance at the micro level means that local crafts people cannot compete in the global market in an effective manner. Moreover, they do not have access to funds, raw material or information. It is imperative that the government take responsibility for developing an organized institution that will help the Indian craft industry. Links with the Ministry of Tourism, too, need to be developed and crafts cooperatives should be set up as marketing outlets.

An important point that emerged, quite unanimously, through the discussions was that since livelihoods and wages are dependent on the orders given by the traders, it is crucial to create direct access to the market especially for women. To rectify the existing situation, it was suggested that a forum for direct interaction between producers and buyers be created at both domestic and international level and that trade distorting subsidies given by developed countries be eliminated. Easier access to credit and better facilities for transportation as well as price stability of raw materials would help create a more enabling environment. Women especially need help to develop their entrepreneurial skills. The need to create utility centres or clusters in each district, as places where crafts women have access to funds, raw material, design workshops as well as buy back facilities under one roof is essential. It was also felt that skill up-gradation

courses especially with the involvement of institutions such as NID and NIFT should be initiated.

The hearings also drew attention to the ways in which people cope with poverty and economic hardship, which included mortgaging land, selling of personal assets, withdrawal of children from schools, discontinuing of medicines, and suicide deaths. That the need to develop a multi skill approach and to have more than one source of livelihood is vital to survival of these communities was a fact that emerged from these hearings.

Though the government has passed some bills for social protection of workers in the informal economy, there are a number of problems with these as for example, the Unorganised Sector Bill which relies on regular contribution of workers whose income is irregular. It was felt, therefore, that the government was not investing in areas that provide social protection but that on the other hand it was relinquishing its responsibility. Under pressure from WTO the government has passed the Fiscal Responsibility Act, by which it has virtually abdicated responsibility towards welfare. All too often as a result of globalization multiple layers of contractors are being created and labour is being outsourced or contracted. This process has made workers' contribution invisible with the issue of workers' rights left completely unaddressed..

The situation is far worse as far as women are concerned. They lack bargaining power since the informal sector is largely unorganized and the absence of unions has meant that the collective strength of the women is considerably reduced. The government has not acknowledged the contribution of women and children in terms of subsistence economy and home-based work.

The impact of globalization, however, has not been completely negative, for example, freer movements of goods and services have provided women with employment opportunities in the hosiery industry in Tirupur. Even women with a lack of educational qualifications and without any skills have found work in the industry. Other attractions of the industry are availability of social welfare schemes, skill training at the workplace which enhances opportunities and imparts multiple skills, and assured minimum daily wages along with overtime payment.

Report

Inaugural Session

Nirmala Sitharaman, Member, National Commission for Women (NCW) welcomed Kanti Singh, Minister of State, and other guests and participants. Introducing the theme of the conference as an attempt to understand the different ways in which globalization has impacted women, she highlighted the urgency of the debate on the issue. She noted that during the course of the one day conference, a gender prism would be applied to the existing trade patterns in the informal sector. The effect of international trade regimes and the WTO on women would be critically analysed.

She thanked the participants and Ms Singh for inaugurating the conference and invited Poornima Advani, Chairperson of the National Commission for Women, to give the introductory address.

Dr Advani expressed her thanks to Ms Singh, the members of the NCW, those who had participated in the public hearings, and the audience for being present for the discussions. She underlined the significance of the conference and described the experiences faced by the Commission while conducting public hearings across the country. She said that the hearings attested to the fact that traditionally women have been, and still are, among the most disadvantaged groups in terms of access to resources and enjoyment of rights. She identified four critical issues in any discussion of women workers in the unorganized sector:

- (a) **Inequality in wages**—the Commission had been concerned about this for quite some time and in the process of public hearings it was seen that there was a glaring gap between what is shown in the official records and the ground reality
- (b) **Longer working hours** that discriminated against women and implied a further reduction in earnings

(c) **Lack of support services**, e.g. welfare schemes which can be accessed by women are inadequate and

(d) **Environment at workplace**, where often women workers face both mental and physical discrimination at the workplace.

She said the advent of globalization though it has opened up new economic opportunities has impacted upon socio-economic well being, and women headed households in the informal sectors (especially home-based workers) are among those most adversely impacted. She said that it was with this perspective that the NCW tried to address issues in consonance with its mandate, and to participate and advise in the process of achieving socio-economic development of women. The Commission is empowered to conduct special studies and investigations on specific problems and issues confronting women. It was as part of this mandate that the Commission launched these series of public hearings with the specific purpose of obtaining first hand information about the conditions of women in different parts of the country. She made the point that in almost all the occupations, home-based workers face more or less similar problems.

The hearings were conducted among workers who perform a wide range of economic activities, including *beedi*-making, kite making, street vendors, vegetable vendors, service providers, construction workers, domestic workers and agricultural and farm workers. She referred to the public hearing held in Kochi, where it was found that despite the **Construction Workers and Building Act, Section 33 and 37** that makes the provision of sanitation, equal wages, availability of toilets and crèches mandatory, none of these facilities had been provided to the women workers. She said it is criminal to ignore these factors as they address basic necessities and their absence violates the right to privacy for women.

In conclusion, she thanked all those who had led and coordinated the public hearings, Nirmala Sitharaman who worked with women workers in the fisheries industry, Mukul Mukherjee who has just finished a report on marketing skills of women in Bengal, Nafisa Hussain who looked at women involved in Kota sari weaving, Viji Srinivasan who did a study on the lives of women

garland makers in Bihar and Delhi, Jaya Jaitly who conducted public hearings with women carpet weavers in Badoi, and Vandana Shiva, who has completed a study on women in agriculture and also conducted public hearings to highlight the problems faced by women farmers because of WTO agreements. Ms Advani said that this entire exercise was an attempt to focus on the rights and needs of the have-nots in the society.

Ratna Sudarshan, Director, Institute of Social Studies Trust, presented a background paper on *Globalisation and its Impact on Women* and also highlighted the findings from some of the hearings conducted by the Commission. Her paper presented an overview of the ways in which changes in economic policy have impacted women, and emphasized the urgency of integrating macro economic analysis with micro level analysis. She felt that the public hearings revealed very clearly the vulnerabilities faced by people in different situations. Not all of these can be attributed to globalization, but they explain the context in which the new policies have been introduced. Her paper was based on findings from the public hearings held in Chattisgarh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Bihar and Rajasthan. The workers included women from the Primary Sector including share-croppers, fisherwomen, farmers, quarry-workers, tea growers, plantation workers, fish processing workers, etc., and the Secondary Sector like bamboo craft workers, synthetic gem cutters, handloom workers, *beedi* makers, jewel workers, khadi-spinning workers as well as the entire range of workers in the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) in Cochin. The Tertiary Sector workers included construction workers, tailoring workers, cobblers, sweepers, street vendors, contract labour, and potters. This detailed classification helps in disaggregating beyond the commonly used categories, and recognizing the very highly specialized kind of economic activities that people are involved in.

She pointed out that although at the macro-level various indicators show that globalization has been a successful strategy, at a micro level globalization has displaced a large number of people from their traditional occupations, creating unacceptable hardships. A more liberal trade policy has meant increased imports coming into the country with a consequent fall in prices, for example, of agricultural commodities. People face loss of work due to increased competition, and greater mechanization. The hardships experienced by people are accentuated by factors like:

- Lack of alternative skills and a lack of other job opportunities
- Lack of welfare schemes and funds in the informal sector and inadequate outreach of existing schemes such as that for *beedi* workers.
- Poor implementation of labour laws.
- Low level of schooling and basic health services, which contributes to greater vulnerability and to the perpetuation of poverty in future generations
- An unresponsive administration.

The main challenge to policy is thus to enable micro-level realities to inform macro-level policy decisions. Although the problem is identifiable at the local level, the solution does not always exist at this level, and is often dependent on national/central level policy-making. The hearings also drew attention to the ways in which people cope, which included mortgaging land, selling of personal assets, withdrawal of children from schools, discontinuing of medicines, and suicide deaths. Different types of solutions could be sought, including *a risk reduction strategy* –which means reversing the policy decisions, *risk mitigation strategies* which implies anticipation of what would happen and thereby creating preventive mechanisms to cope with them and finally *risk coping strategies* which means developing and structuring a system of social protection. Debate on appropriate policy responses could include examining the possibility of trade agreements with neighboring countries, and ensuring the engendering of trade agreements. The hearings also underlined the need to develop a multi skill approach, and to have more than one source of livelihood.

The Minister of State, Kanti Singh gave the inaugural address and highlighted the urgency to conduct more public discussions like the present one, where the women can voice their views. She pointed out that the impact of globalization has not only affected women but also other sections of society. However, the plight of women needs to be highlighted because they constitute the poorest of the poor. She said just as every coin has two sides, globalization too has had both good and the bad impacts. The aim, therefore, should be to combat the latter by creating preventive mechanisms and also initiating a participatory exercise in which all the associated

actors can participate fully. She pointed out that it was difficult to completely obviate the undertones of western influence inherent in globalization. She also felt that the social, economic and political aspects, too, need to be looked at because the laws in India are still not gender sensitive. Therefore the imminent challenge before every one is to push for development amidst the paradoxes. The informal sector and the self-help groups (SHGs) should be the center of focus. SHGs can become a powerful medium to facilitate change and bring some visibility. She had been to various 'jansunvais' that took place in different parts of the country and saw that discrimination against women is all-pervasive. She said that whether it was a case of sexual harassment in the workplace or a question of unfair wages, everywhere women are treated in an unequal way. However she appreciated the efforts of the State Women Commissions, which have been established in various states, to address such issues. Some of the valuable suggestions that she offered included:

- Strengthening and promoting instruments, which can consolidate the strengths of the women.
- Vertical and horizontal coordination of the departments within the ministries of Government of India.
- Issues of health and education should be kept in mind, when talking of the effects of globalization. She mentioned the effects of the *Common Minimum Programme* in this respect, which aims to achieve this goal.
- More public hearings should be held and encouraged as they reflect a participatory effort of the citizens and the government along with civil society. Such platforms are necessary to sensitize the individual.

She assured the participants of her own interest in furthering this agenda, and hoped that the NCW would keep her briefed on their findings and recommendations.

Session II

Business Session—Sector Based Experience

Chair: Baby Rani Maurya

Four presentations by four speakers were made in this session which effectively encapsulated both the positive and negative aspects of globalization. Jaya Jaitly spoke on Badoi carpet weaving. Her presentation focused on the negative almost disastrous impact of globalization on the women carpet workers. Shirin Philip spoke on the positive aspects of globalization with a special reference to the hosiery industry in Tirupur, Tamil Nadu. Pratibha Nithani focused her presentation on those interventions that can minimize the ill effects of globalization. Her approach was social and psychological. Dr Vandana Shiva spoke on women in agriculture.

PRESENTATION 1: JAYA JAITLY

Jaya Jaitly started her presentation with a remark that livelihood is the crux of the issues to be addressed. Pointing to the changing nature of work, she said, that when one talks about the impact of globalization it is necessary to recognize the importance of the work done in the homes. She said this was imperative because the forces of globalization control the market, where these women are often exploited. And, according to her, it is the following factors that are responsible for the exploitation of women:

1. No bargaining power in the hands of women in the market, because the informal sector is largely unorganized. This underlined the need for unions that can help to consolidate the strength of these women. In other words, the importance of unionization is being felt as this is presently non-existent in the informal sector. The absence of unions has reduced the collective strength of women workers.
2. Increasing insecurity among women, especially in the case of the *Badoi* workers.
3. Attention should be paid to child workers because there are so many of them in India. Poverty and an inability to afford expensive schooling are two of the main factors responsible for this social problem in this country which keep children from getting an education. The girl child is the main victim of this vicious cycle and the future of the girl child is often sacrificed in a patriarchal society such as ours

4. There is no recognition of the work that home based workers do at the national and the international level. This area needs to be focused on by creating awareness among policy makers and by highlighting the contributions as well as the vulnerabilities of these workers.
5. Vulnerability to globalization is intrinsically linked to the lives of women carpet workers and one of the main reasons for this is the import of machine made carpets from Iran, Pakistan and China. These are cheaper and have therefore captured the market in India thus taking away employment from these people who are dependant on this industry for their survival and livelihood. The lack of alternative skills means that these workers are getting increasingly displaced.

She put forward a number of valuable suggestions to the Commission that may help mitigate these problems;

- The government should focus on the domestic needs of the people in a gender sensitive manner before negotiating international trade agreements.
- All the political parties, both at the centre and at the state level need to work together to find a solution to these problems.
- Identifying ways to create space for women in the markets. This is an important step that will lead to greater economic empowerment for women.
- Underlining the need to change women's thinking because often due to patriarchal social conditioning they are not ready to take challenges. It is essential to encourage and promote SHGs and trade unions that can serve as instruments to facilitate change.

PRESENTATION 11—SHERIN PHILIP

The second presentation by Sherin Philip focused on the hosiery sector in Tamil Nadu. She pointed out that developments at international platforms for the freer movements of goods and services have been helpful to the women in Tirupur in terms of employment. She focused on the positive aspects of the industry and maintained that it is capability and conducive labour markets that are the main factors responsible for women's success. Some factors that are responsible for the success of any business are:

- Social aspect of the workplace plays an important role. It is the social and moral responsibility of the employer to make the workplace conducive for women to work in.
- Labour participation is another important factor which is responsible for the success of the industry. The focus should be on developing human resources and the criteria of assessment should be focused on productivity vs. automation. In other words, labour productivity needs to be seen as improving the potential of the labour as *inputs to productivity*. It is argued that if the two are synchronous, there will be increased employment. This process will also equip workers with multi-dimensional talents.
- Information technology is important in facilitating productivity.

Ms Philip then discussed the experience of the hosiery units in Tirupur. She said one of the main factors behind the growth of the industry was the conducive environment provided to the workers. Giving some statistics she said, the registered industrial units have increased from 720 in 1990 to 5000 units employing around three lakh women in 2004. She also mentioned that in terms of employment, the sex ratio is 60 per cent women and 40 per cent men. All women above 18 years of age who wish to work can find employment here. She said some strengths and positive points that have attracted women to this industry are:

- Availability of social welfare schemes.
- No prior educational qualifications required. Women without any skills are also welcome to join the industry.
- Another strong aspect is the strengthening and imparting of skill training at the workplace, which enhances opportunities and teaches multiple skills.
- Another factor which she focused on was the conducive environment (geographical and climatic) of Tirupur and the effort on the part of the employers to making it an attractive place for employment. The locally available raw material, the provision of hostel facilities for women workers and the assurance of job security have made employment here an attractive proposition.
- The wage structure is another factor responsible for making Tirupur a success story. She said that the minimum daily wages range between Rs 60-to Rs 90 (plus overtime) and the maximum wages range from Rs 125 to Rs 150. Besides this a number of social security schemes have been provided to the workers.

She concluded her presentation by stating that the Tirupur case clearly suggests that globalization has had positive impacts on women's employment.

PRESENTATION III—PRATIBHA NITHANI

The third speaker presented an indirect impact of globalization focusing on two cross cutting issues: that of media and women and the effects of globalization on both. In her presentation Ms Nithani emphasized the social and psychological aspects of the issue of globalization as it affects women and media especially in its links with a growing capitalist culture, which is reinforcing a consumerist mindset in the society. She said media plays an important role in shaping perceptions and one of the specific ways it has changed perceptions is with regard to the portrayal of women. One cannot but be aware of the demeaning way in which women are very often portrayed in the media. Citing various examples and cases to prove how this change in perceptions is a product of globalization, she also drew attention to the issues of censorship, which are completely overlooked by TV channels. She concluded her presentation by emphasizing that the way in which media portrays women is crucial because mass media has become today the sole source of domestic entertainment and plays an important role in shaping perspectives and defining the image of the women.

PRESENTATION IV--VANDANA SHIVA

Dr Vandana Shiva spoke on the structural impact of the WTO on women and agriculture. She said her presentation was based on the public hearings conducted by NCW in the four states of Karnataka, Punjab, West-Bengal and Bundelkhand. In Karnataka it was organized in collaboration with the Karnataka Rajya Raita Sangha Sangha; in Punjab with the Punjab Stree Sabha and Vigyan Jath; in West-Bengal with the Shramjeevi Mahila Sangha and in Bundelkhand with the Center for Inter-Disciplinary Studies. She said dealing with the effect of the WTO regime on women was not easy and therefore she did have some difficulty in clarifying the assessment of a gendered impact of WTO. Dr Shiva focused on the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights Agreements (TRIPs) and forcefully said that property rights are patents on the products of mind. According to her its impact can be clearly seen in the agricultural sector because in the pre-WTO regime women farmers were the selectors and the keepers of the seed but post WTO there has been a paradigm shift and so under this new

property rights regime seeds are no longer in the hands of the women. She pointed out that women are no longer decision-makers. They are losing out as new technologies are introduced—to illustrate her point she cited cases of high yielding varieties of seeds and the use of chemical fertilizers having edged out the agriculturists/ farmers who earlier selected and kept a store of their seeds. She said this situation can be seen in Punjab and Bihar where people are harvesting crops, but they are producing no grain. Dr Shiva then turned to focus on the social and cultural ramifications of globalization that had also been emphasized by Pratibha Nithani in her presentation.

According to Dr Shiva, another area of concern for policy makers is the tenfold decline in the exports since the introduction of the new liberalization policy due to which Indian women are suffering a livelihood and penury crises. This is becoming increasingly visible every month by the growing number of starvation deaths. Women are losing their livelihoods on a daily basis. Many of them resorting to prostitution, which is unfortunately becoming an income generating source, as a last resort. She raised the question that unlike in the media, which reflects the epitome of a consumerist culture, why is it that the bodies of women in agriculture are not valued? Economic polarization was the common thread joining the micro and the macro level. Drawing attention to the latest Census reports she said that today female infanticide has assumed epidemic proportions especially in the rural areas. She also showed the linkages between income and low sex ratio by pointing out that the higher the economic indicators, the lower is the sex ratio. Women have become the *live-nots* of society.

However, she felt, there are some positive things too in this otherwise grim scenario, the organization of women groups being one such. Success stories can be seen in the cases of the Lijjat Papad and dalia makers of Bundelkhand where women have survived globalization because they are systematically organized basing their activities on quality, health and nutrition. The reason for this is that women are the decision-makers, in control of their assets as well as their labour. She contrasted this with the Bikaneri Bujhiyas, owned by Pepsi where women had lost out. She drew attention to the increasing nutritional hazards that are a byproduct of globalization because often bringing down the cost of production compromises on product quality. She added that the case study of industrial units like the one in Tirupur should

not be blindly applauded as the real outcome will be visible only later, post 2005. In January 2005 the Multi Fiber Agreement will be phased out, which is expected to pose a threat to the textile industry in the developing countries. She also pointed out that industrial production is very different from craft production in terms of ecological concerns and involvement of labour that enhances human creativity. She proposed the following initiatives to combat the ill effects of globalization:

- Land and seed rights should be seen as women's rights. This will help in retaining the decision-making process among the women
- Livelihood and food security are connected. Therefore these two should be a prime-focus. This will also help in combating violence against women because indirectly it brings women to the center of the production system.
- Agro processing should be encouraged in India, because it is this area wherein women have expertise. This is important to sustain the grass root momentum to produce good quality products.
- She criticized recent government programmes like the public distribution system (PDS) and the mid-day meal programmes. She said if the present policies are pursued and the needs of the people ignored, soon most of these programmes will be dependant on imports from outside, which is not really catering to the fundamental problem of food security in the country. She proposed that the women's movement should take up such issues and more pilot projects in different parts of the country should be undertaken to look out for alternatives that can be benchmarked as success stories. Nutritional programmes should be based on indigenous products.

Dr Shiva concluded her presentation by saying that in order to pursue an effective approach the policy making process needs to be reversed. She said the main problem lies in the gap between the existence of the various programmes, schemes and their implementation. The main factor responsible for this was the peripheral approach of the government while addressing the issues. She questioned existing farm practices which had failed to address the most pertinent issues and concerns of agriculturists/farmers in terms of food security.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

During the post lunch session three groups were formed, to discuss issues of markets, technology and social protection respectively. Reports of these discussions follow.

Group 1 – Markets

Facilitator: Dr. Aasha Kapur Mehta

The group consisted of 14 or 15 people, of which 5 or 6 were carpet weavers from Badoi, 2 or 3 were entrepreneurs from the industrial units of Tirupur and the remaining were from non-governmental organizations like Dausa in Rajasthan, Udyogini in New Delhi, Crafts Council in Assam, and Orissa. Some people were involved with grassroot action and some associated with research. Except for the hosiery products made in Tirupur and the embroidery niche market handled by an NGO in Rajasthan where it was felt that there was no shortage of demand for products and globalization had led to increased opportunities for employment and income generation, the experience in most other cases was that wages had declined, as had the number of days per month on which employment was available. As a result incomes and livelihoods had also declined.

Both livelihoods and wages are dependent on the orders given by the traders. Escape from the exploitative wages paid by them requires the movement from wage labour to entrepreneurship. For example, in Assam it is the women who constitute the main work force in the eri silk industry. They do the rearing, spinning and weaving of eri silk. About 90 per cent of these workers are housewives and they perform these activities after completing their household work i.e. during their idle hours. But the main commercial activities are controlled by the eri silk merchants and the women workers are compelled to follow their directions. There is no centralized spinning unit of eri silk. So, there is a perennial shortage of eri yarn which translates into a shortfall of the entire eri silk industry. Availability of eri yarn will minimize the exploitation of women workers. Similarly, in case of the muga silk industry, 90 per cent of workers are women. They do everything, right from rearing the worms to reeling, spinning and weaving the thread. The main difficulty here is the cost of the muga silk. The industry is dependant on participation of many groups because all the activities cannot possibly be

performed by one group. There are numerous middlemen like cocoon merchants, yarn merchants, cloth merchants, and others who control the entire industry and it is essential that some mechanism be set in place to interlink the different group activities in order to minimize exploitation. At Sualkuchi, weaving of silk (mulberry and muga) is a commercial activity. The weavers are mostly women who work here on yearly contract basis. Their work hours are from 6am to 10pm at night with a one-hour lunch break. The weavers are like bonded labourers. There is no regulation for controlling the exploitation.

In Badoi, the carpet weavers have exceptional skills in making extremely beautiful designs and producing high quality small and large rugs. However, they are completely dependent on traders for marketing their products. The market fluctuates leading to problems of survival. Despite the long hours of work that the women put in, the returns that accrue to them are marginal. Other major constraints that they face include lack of access to credit or to a marketing set up. Participants of the discussions suggested ways to better the ground situation for these women workers:

- Create networks so that producers can deal directly deal with buyers both domestic and foreign and understand what the market needs. Networks should be built along single product lines to increase the reach of small entrepreneurs and help build their capacity.
- Access to finance on reasonable terms must be available without collateral to all SHGs.
- This can be done through rural credit cards or through rural banks. However, the lenders must ensure that the products are then made marketable through tie-ups with marketing institutions e.g. Handloom Boards, Emporiums etc. This must be at the grass root level.
- Impart short term training courses on design and marketing for craftswomen through premier institutions like NID and NIFT.
- Provide bridge courses for craftswomen to enable them to get admission to courses at NID and NIFT.
- Good supervision monitoring of existing programmes and implementing minimum labour standards.
- Government departments, jails, hospitals, railways, should give priority to products produced by groups of poor craftswomen in placing orders for products such as waste paper baskets, cushions, bed-sheets, office requirements etc.

- A forum for direct interaction between producers and buyers is needed at both domestic and international level.
- Emphasis should be laid on creating utility centers or clusters in each district, as places where crafts women have access to funds, raw material, and design workshops and buy-back facilities under one roof in order to ensure better quality of products and also to help the crafts persons become economically stronger. It may be helpful to study and learn from the Thai and Malaysian models. In Thailand the “cluster” model is being followed at the village level, while in Malaysia craft centres in various areas provide assistance under one roof. Here the crafts people have access to funds, raw material, design workshops and buy-back facilities all at one place. This ensures the quality of products and the economic empowerment of the crafts people. The results can be seen on a global scale.
- For marketing craft based products a link should be created with the Ministry of Tourism
- The private entrepreneurs should be given the social responsibility for providing outlets for the markets
- Craft cooperatives should also set up as marketing outlets
- Support for designs by the National Commission of Women was also recommended
- Elimination of trade distorting subsidies and over supply from developed countries
- A need for monitoring markets closely
- Policies to ensure the stability of raw material prices
- Facilitating value addition and diversification into processing and higher value products
- Need to improve the will and capacity of entrepreneurship among women and network organizations along single product lines
- Arrange finances at the rural level through micro-credit cards and rural banks. However lenders must ensure that the products are made marketable through reliable institutions like handloom boards and emporiums, and this must be at the grass root level
- Though there was no shortage of market demand in the craft-sector, the problem of credit access and transport should be given attention
- Craftsmen to be made aware of the various government schemes through local bodies like Block Development Office

- Craft Development Centres should be at the dostrict level (rural) and not just at urban centres.
- Modernisation of products based on eri and muga that are specific to the region of assam must get special attention.
- Fibre banks should be created especially for eri and muga to enable crafts persons easy access.
- Products should reflect original indigenous designs with value addition. Local products must reflrest individual cultures and unique designs.
- Craft centres should be developed in partnership with the private sector. For instance in the context of the North East, if tea and oil companies can provide retail outlets as part of their social responsibility that would be ideal as they are rural based.
- Equipment used by craftsmen should be upgraded
- There must be a non-official monitoring body to monitor the implementation of large sanctioned projects perhaps by appointing a kind of Ombudsman. This is because many sanctioned projects exist only on paper and the money never reaches the craftspeople.
- In the context of the non-timber based forest produce, that is collected by large numbers of poor tribal women, who walk for hours in the forest in order to do so, the returns that accrue to them are extremely low. There are cases of innovative interventions that have been successfully made for instance in the context of gum, which are based on understanding what properties drive product sales and how to bridge the gap between what is produced and what will sell. Professionally qualified MBAs or persons with proven marketing skills should head cooperatives that market products produced by the poor.
- Eliminate trade-distorting subsidies and over supply from developed countries in primary product markets. Monitor markets closely.

Group II-Social Protection

Facilitator: Dr.JYOTI KIRAN SHUKLA

The Social Protection group was the largest discussion group comprising 17 participants from various parts of the country. The group consisted of academicians, activists, NGO workers,

overall development in terms of education, health etc. Social Protection has to be contextualised within the local area.

- Due to globalization layers of contractors are being created and labour is outsourced or contracted. In the process workers' contribution remains invisible and their rights are not addressed. There is a need to develop a policy that will protect the labour rights of workers.
- It is important to generate awareness among women regarding policies on social protection so that they can access the same for their benefit. The group felt that NGOs should assume this responsibility.
- SHGs have been found to be a successful tool in achieving social protection. There is a need to develop more such models to ensure social protection.
- Some suggested community based social protection but it was strongly contested by many participants who felt that it is the government's duty to provide social protection. In the changing economy, the question is whether the community is equipped to give social protection, especially in the context of globalization. Moreover, it was felt that most of our understanding of community based social protection is based on women's care giving, nurturing role. Others felt that when we speak of community based social protection we are talking of caste groups as community, which are also exploitative.

GroupIII-Technology

Facilitator: Dr MUKUL MUKHERJEE

Dr. Mukul Mukherjee, the facilitator of the group discussion began by enumerating the peculiar characteristics of technology, which is dynamic, and under a continuous process of change. She also said that technology has a direct relation with the export sector of the economy.

- The importance of traditional technology in retaining manpower has been discussed at length. It was pointed out that newer technologies often displace labour. However, indigenous technology, which is in tune with our culture and value system, can accommodate many more people. It was also pointed out that if we import 'advanced technology' from the West, we would not only worsen the problem of unemployment

but also lose our place in the global market. It was pointed out that the cultural dimension of this technology debate can be sorted out by promoting user-friendly technology and women friendly technology. On the other hand, to promote this traditional technology, we have to be careful on the organizational aspects.

- The problem of retrenchment among the construction labourers in and around Delhi was discussed. The construction industry has experienced a boom during the last decade or so but despite this the labourers are losing their jobs. There is no place for the unskilled labour force in the new and more mechanized methods that are currently in use in the market. The issues that were raised were related to skill up gradation and skill transfer. The group agreed that systems by which construction workers could acquire new skills allowing them to access work in the industry need to be developed and strengthened.
- The group initiated a discussion on role of NGOs in this scenario. NGOs can contribute enormously by way of handling training, capacity building and sensitization and awareness building process. They can do this in tandem with government and other agencies. Another important point was regarding the formation of women groups and cooperatives. These groups and co-operatives can not just help put forward their demands before the government but also provide alternative opportunities, build up training and skills. They can also help by developing institutions and a domestic market. This will go a long way towards an expansion of alternative technologies.
- The importance of local context and local dynamics was also debated in the group. This is important both from the feasibility point of view and acceptability of new technology. In a country like India with diverse cultural traits and knowledge base, local dynamics firmly determine its importance in developing any new strategy.
- The creation of a positive environment for the development of cost effective technology with the help of local technology and local knowledge was discussed in the group. This is an issue that is directly related to the development of a market information system.
- The process of globalization has impacted the traditional craftsmen in diverse ways. The recent crisis of the gold jewelry industry in the southern part of India was discussed in the meeting as a case study. Import of machine made gold jewelry from Taiwan in large quantity has made the traditional goldsmiths unemployed. In addition to that because of the lack of finances at the local level, the craftsmen are unable to launch innovative

entrepreneurships. However, this situation has opened up new opportunities for the women members of the goldsmith community, a number of who have taken new jobs of jewelry estimation with banks and other financial institutions. In the northeast traditional handloom industry and home-based bamboo industry are lagging behind in the same manner in comparison with Thai and Malaysian products. Lack of finance at the micro level leaves the crafts persons unable to compete effectively. The crafts persons do not have access to funds, raw material, and information. It is essential that market orientations and market driven designs be promoted in order to keep the crafts industry healthy. Government should take responsibility to develop a more organized institution to help the Indian craft industry which has lot of market potential in the global arena.

- The participants also discussed the necessity of creating a space for debate on nature and ecology. The importance of ecological concerns as regards the processes of globalization were discussed. It was felt that such information related to globalization, and probable impacts of globalization should be provided to the people, so that they are aware of the issues and the language of the debate. The group members agreed that 'right to information' is one of the key concepts in this regard. A large part of our labour force does not even know the basic labour laws, which can be imparted by the right to information movements.
- The group felt that public hearings open up the debate on many issues, which help everybody including people, NGOs and government to identify issues and related problems and look for viable solutions.

SUMMING- UP & VALEDICTORY ADDRESS

Brief reports on the group discussions were presented by each of the facilitators. In the discussion that followed, Viji Srinivasan pointed out that while discussing markets, the NCW should find some way of ensuring minimum labour standards. It was also suggested that the issues of employment that have been thrown up by the hearings should be made available to the Planning Commission so that they are added as a valuable input in the formulation of the proposed Employment Guarantee Scheme.

Jyotsana Sivarammya, of The Institute of Social Studies Trust, did a very brief summing up of the days proceedings and pointed to the fact that in the course of the discussions both positive and negative impacts of globalization had been put forward. It was clear that first, the hearings have played a very important role in bringing out the need to look at problems and prospects from a sectoral as well as area specific perspective, and second, that such hearings need to be a continuous process, providing feedback on how policy decisions made at the national level are actually impacting on people.

Dr Poornima Advani, Chairperson of the NCW gave the valedictory address. She said it is clear that globalization has impacted states across the country in different ways. She said there is a need to contextualize the success stories, before replicating them blindly across the country. She said the public hearings would continue, as the struggle to develop a policy that is sensitive to the needs of women and of the poor is a continuous one. She said more emphasis should be laid on awareness and capacity building, and there is a need to sensitize people living in the cities. Dr Advani pointed out that the entire gamut of hearings reflects the commitment with which the Commission had worked. She said it is the responsibility of the Commission to take up to the authorities the recommendations suggested by the women. She concluded by saying that it is not the people in the informal sector who are unorganized, it is in fact the government agencies and civil society which needs to become much more organized while dealing with the needs and wants of these workers.

Paper presented at the Conference on Impact of Globalisation on Women, organized by the National Commission for Women, 17 September 2004

**Globalisation and its Impact on Women:
Findings from the hearings conducted by the National Commission
for Women**

Ratna M. Sudarshan¹

I. Background

The present wave of globalization was ushered in with the end of the Cold War in the late '80's. Globalisation is a nebulous term, referring to changes leading to closer links across the world in political, economic as well as socio-cultural realms. There has been increasing acceptance of trade and financial liberalization by countries across the world, strengthened economic linkages across national boundaries, and an increased Western influence on other societies. The promise of faster growth through integrated markets, however, does not necessarily mean that poverty will be eliminated, or that all persons agree that global markets represent the best development route for all nations. Thus, with the rising significance of globalisation in world economics, both pro-globalisation and anti-globalisation groups/lobbies have surfaced. A positive view of globalization is contained in Amartya Sen's argument that

'.we cannot reverse the economic predicament of the poor across the world by withholding from them the great advantages of contemporary technology, the well established efficiency of international trade and exchange, and the social as well as economic merits of living in an open society. Rather, the main issue is how to make good use of the remarkable benefits of economic intercourse and technological progress in a way that pays attention to the interests of the deprived and the underdog.' (Sen 2002)

Some other studies show that open economies grow faster and richer than the closed ones (e.g. Dollar and Kraay 2001). East Asian and Chinese experience are often quoted as examples of how external opening can lead to higher growth and poverty reduction. In contrast, the World Social Forum has re-iterated its 'total rejection of the neo-liberal policies of globalisation'. A number of trade unions, NGOs, gender activists and academicians have a sceptical view of globalisation.

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Without in any way implicating them in the final product, I would like to acknowledge helpful suggestions given by Mr D.K. Joshi, and my colleagues Rina Bhattacharya and Rakhee Bhattacharya.

Economic reforms were introduced in India in 1991, in response to a short term liquidity crisis in the external sector. In addition to the immediate liquidity problem, it was felt that such crises would continue to recur without structural adjustment and a change in development policy. The devaluation of the rupee was directed at the immediate problem; the process of lowering tariff barriers eliminating quantitative restrictions on imports, doing away with export subsidies and opening up the export markets, industrial delicensing, convertibility of the rupee on the current account, deregulating interest rates and easing foreign direct investment norms was set in motion as part of a longer term restructuring strategy. There has been a noticeable improvement in the macro indicators of well being for the country since 1991. The share of trade in the GDP, a summary indicator of openness of an economy, shows steady increase. The ratio of exports to GDP has gone up from 5.8 in 1990-91 to 10.4 in 2003-04(P); in the case of imports/GDP the ratio has increased from 8.8 in 1990-91 to 13.2 in 2003-4 (P). Foreign exchange reserves have increased from \$ 5.8 billion in 1990-91 to \$ 76.1 in 2002-03 and \$ 112.9 in 2003-04 (P). The improvements in the balance of payment position and reduction in external vulnerability are evident from Annex 1.

In India, there has been both a commitment to economic reform which would encourage stronger participation in world markets, a greater role of foreign investment, and at the same time there is concern for the possible adverse impact of new economic policies on groups of people. Thus, the Common Minimum Programme of the Government of India (May 2004) states that

‘The UPA reiterates its abiding commitment to economic reforms with a human face, that stimulates growth, investment and employment. Further reforms are needed and will be carried out in agriculture, industry and services. The UPA’s economic reforms will be oriented primarily to spreading and deepening rural prosperity, to significantly improving the quality of public systems and delivery of public services, to bringing about a visible and tangible difference in the quality of life of ordinary citizens of our country’

The process of globalisation yields benefits but can burden some sections of the society. On the one hand it can trigger innovation, raise productivity and bring down the prices of commodities on the other it can lead to business closures or restructuring thereby accentuating poverty and unemployment.

Globalisation and its impact were considered in the studies undertaken for the Second National Commission on Labour. In assessing the consequences of new policies, the Commission finds several positive developments: ‘As a result of the new economic policy, inflation is under control; we have been able to accumulate enough foreign exchange reserves, Indian companies have access to global financial markets, India’s external debt position has improved. Some industries like information Technology (IT) have made impressive progress, taking advantage of global economic integration; foreign investment is coming to India both in portfolio investment as well as in industrial projects, Indian consumers who can afford to pay, have increased access to all types and a large variety of international brands of goods in the market’.

The negative impacts that are noted in the report are however serious, and largely turn around issues of employment. ‘Except the IT, telecommunications and entertainment industry, all other traditional industries in India are facing problems....jobs are being created only in very narrow fields such as information, communication, and in certain informal sectors using low technology. Other areas of economic activities, like traditional

manufacturing, agricultural and non-farm activities are not experiencing any increase in jobs. Globalisation led growth cannot be described as job led growth'. (vol I, part I, pp 275-7)

Special concern is expressed towards workers in plantation industry. 'The plantation industry is perhaps the worst affected industry. Prices of rubber, tea, coffee, etc have come down drastically during recent years and production in the plantation industry is no longer economic. It is estimated that the total losses of tea industry in South India were of the order of Rs 350 crore in 1999-2000. Because of our commitments to the WTO, large imports of rubber, coconuts, tea and coffee from Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Kenya, and Vietnam etc are coming to India....Workers in plantation industry are deeply concerned with this trend of globalization and increased mechanisation in the industry to reduce the costs.' (NCL, vol I, part I, 226).

The Economic Survey 2004 reports that the Indian economy in the year 2003-04 recorded a healthy growth rate in terms of real GDP at 8.1%. This growth rate is not only impressive in terms of our own records; a growth rate higher than 8% has been achieved in the past in only three years, viz., 1967-68, 1975-76 and 1988-89 (*ibid*) but also in terms of the overall world economy. The Indian economy in the year 2003-04 was among the fastest growing economies in the world and in Asia it had the second highest growth rate after China. In terms of sectors, the highest growth rate was recorded by the agricultural sector at 9.1% followed by services at 8.4% and industry at 7.1% (*ibid*). It has however been argued that the high growth rate has not been accompanied by a concomitant growth in employment- some experts expressed fears of 'jobless growth'. According to the Economic Survey (2003- 04), though employment growth at the rate of 2.07 % p.a. between 2000-02 was higher than the 1.07% p.a. recorded in 1994-2000, the target of additional employment of one crore per year was not reached. (An additional average employment of 84 lakh per year was generated between the years 2000-02).

In trying to see whether globalization has had a gender differentiated impact, studies commissioned by the Group on Women and Child Workers, Second National Commission on Labour suggest a number of different ways in which changes attributable to globalization and changing economic policy may be having an impact on women, in particular in terms of employment, wage rate and also in the social sector. For example, the international anti-tobacco campaign is beginning to affect the volume of work in bidi rolling, which is a major employer of women, employing around 4-5 m persons. In food processing new technologies are displacing both skilled and unskilled workers. Growth stimulated by the forces of globalization which has meant a loss of employment in general and for women in particular may augment inequality. Instead of spreading wealth it actually concentrates it. Street vending has been adversely affected; the expansion of the automobile sector, the development of shopping malls and more modern urban infrastructure, have all acted to squeeze the space available to the street vendor. An increase in export demand for crafts products has meant a substantial increase in the number of persons employed in this sector: an estimated increase from 48.25 lakhs persons during 1991-92 to 81.05 lakhs in 1997-98. The participation of women in these activities is on the increase, especially in some crafts including like embroidery, weaving, cane, bamboo and grass products, costume jewelry, pottery, coir products etc. There is some evidence that women's participation in traditionally male dominated crafts like brassware is also increasing. New employment opportunities have come in the form of a growing demand for educational and health care services. (see Report of Group on Women and Child Workers, National Commission on Labour, 2001).

Several attempts have been made over the last decade to assess the impact of globalization, since evidently the impact is not uniform across sectors and activities. (see for example UNIFEM 1996; Jha 2003; VVG NLI 2004).

To understand the impact of globalization and the associated changes that have accompanied this era – trade liberalization, privatization, and so forth – it is extremely important to have information on the micro level impacts of various policy changes. This means that macro analysis has to be supplemented with micro level studies and the gathering of information from different parts of the country and different social groups, to get a sense of who benefits and who does not, and what are the actions that need to be taken.

The National Commission for Women has responded to the concerns expressed on the impact on women by holding a series of public hearings in different parts of the country. These public hearings, at each of which between 4-500 women participated, tried to put together information on the current situation of poor women in different types of occupations, and the factors that have worsened their situation in recent years. The groups included workers in agriculture and allied activities, manufacturing and services. The information gathered through these public hearings is naturally not limited to the impact of ‘globalisation’ per se. However certain kinds of impacts are clearly attributable to economic policy changes. This paper attempts to bring the findings of the hearings into a form in which it may be possible to debate over appropriate policy choices to protect poor women against adverse consequences of reforms.

Section II of the paper summarizes the chief findings of the public hearings, including ways in which recent changes in policy, prices and markets have affected women’s work in various sectors, as well as other factors that contribute to worsening the situation of poor workers and increasing their vulnerability. Section III summarizes the recommendations made at the various hearings, and the emerging policy issues to be further debated at a national level.

II. The impact of recent changes in markets, prices, and technology: findings of the public hearings

The National Commission of Women has held hearings in different parts of the country and with different groups of workers over the last two years to get first hand information on the impact of economic policy changes. Most of the hearings were held with workers from different sectors. However in Chhattisgarh, the emphasis was on the problems in the area, rather than a sectoral focus. The section that follows reviews the reports² on some of the hearings held in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Chhattisgarh, Bihar and Rajasthan, and should be seen as an indicative picture of impact. The hearings brought together workers from different sectors, and while the experience of each sector is unique, the attempt here has been to identify certain common issues and concerns. Although it is the problems and not the opportunities of globalization that are more evident here, it needs to be kept in mind that some groups have benefited: examples being workers in hosiery and embroidery and in the kite industry.

² The reports used in this paper are listed at the end of the paper.

Globalization can change the economic environment in a number of ways. These include changes in technology, in policy (such as trade liberalization), labour policy reform, legal reform, social security. It is the first two, i.e. technical change and trade policy liberalization, that are most evident in the experiences of women workers.

Table 1 below summarises the main issues raised by the workers. The impacts can be broadly summarized as resulting from increased competition, domestic or export market, resulting in a fall in demand and loss of earnings/ work; introduction of new technology which has displaced labour; shortage of raw material due to diversion to other uses; ecological damage as a result of new forms of resource use. Since the hearings brought together workers from a particular sector and in a particular location, the problem (as well as the recommendation) has been stated with reference to a particular situation. It needs to be re-iterated here that the issues and problems raised are specific to particular groups of workers in certain locations. Our purpose is to try and identify general issues and concerns, based on the detailed micro situations that are illustrated through the hearings.

One of the main findings of the hearings is that workers who have lost their jobs or been otherwise adversely affected have been unable to find alternative employment. Here we briefly review the various coping strategies that have been resorted to by the workers. The situation in which workers find themselves is compounded by poverty and vulnerability arising out of a context that is pre-existing, and Table 2 reviews these factors. As shown in Annex 2, the actual wages earned in 2002, as reported by the workers in Kerala (and this is without making any allowance for inflation), are between one third to one half of their earnings 3-5 years previously.

The workers represented in the hearings were from different sectors, as indicated in Annex 3. Most of the important agricultural commodities in Kerala can now be freely imported. The result has been a fall in most prices as the price of imported commodities, which acted as a benchmark, was lower than domestic prices. The charts below show the fluctuation in prices of selected plantation crops, confirming the fall in prices of almost all crops (Annex 4). The smaller plantations have been unable to break even and have either closed down or sold their land, resulting in unemployment of large numbers of workers. In other cases, it is reported that plantation owners have increased the work load of women by requiring workers to work longer hours, in effect lowering their wages.

The hearings repeatedly made it clear that existing legislation is not being complied with. This was found to be true even in the Special Economic Zone in Cochin. The failure to give any benefits to the workers, and the ease with which they were removed from work in case of a fall in market demand, confirms that it is the worker who bears the burden of market fluctuations.

Mechanisation has affected workers everywhere, including in agriculture and in the construction industry. Construction workers pointed out that the quality of the concrete mix that is prepared by hand is superior to that prepared by Ready mix Concrete machines now available. However, using the latter reduces the time taken and displaces a large volume of labour. The workers have demanded that the machines should not be used for small constructions (below 5000 sq ft area) as there is no reduction in the quality of construction if machines are not used.

A representative of the Tamil Nadu Voluntary Health Association pointed out that the leading causes of death among women in the reproductive age had been found to be

TB of the lungs, followed by suicides, next burns and then heart attacks. Two decades ago, neither suicides nor burns figured in the list of leading causes. The representative argued that it is as a result of stress and social changes adverse to women that these are now among the leading causes, and that these changes were a result of adverse social impact of globalisation. The steep rise in prices of medicines, increased work load, and absence of village level health facilities all contribute to worsening the situation regarding women's health. It can be noted that medicine prices are expected to go up further with TRIPs, and if so, the vulnerable sections will be the first casualty of that.

Workers had a range of suggestions, and the Jury appointed by the NCW made several recommendations in each state. These are considered in Section III.

The hearings also brought out very clearly that there are certain problems that cannot be linked to globalization, but which play a large part in increasing the levels of vulnerability of people. Some of these, which were brought up in the public hearings, are summarized below in Table 2. The vulnerability of workers is clearly much greater in the absence of alternative skills, maybe them unduly dependent on one source of income, and the absence of welfare schemes. Again and again, the workers pointed out that labour laws and other protective legislation (such as the sharecropping law) are not complied with. Delays incurred in processing insurance claims, the poor outreach of the Beedi Workers Welfare Fund, and the unresponsiveness of local administrations, all put the worker in a more vulnerable situation.

The coping strategies to which women have had to resort are well illustrated in the experiences of workers in Kerala and Chennai, who face loss of work / fall in earnings compounded by indebtedness, and excessive drinking by men leading to increased violence against women. A number of coping strategies have been mentioned by the women, including

- migrant workers who had come to Kerala have left in search of work elsewhere
- try other work, take on casual work where possible
- mortgaging land
- sale of assets (eg utensils)
- withdrawal of children from school
- discontinuation of medicines to save on health related expenditure
- women forced into prostitution
- and the ultimate strategy, suicide. . Between 1998 and 2000, 300 jewel workers in Kerala committed suicide. As one handloom weaver explained 'Because of the absolute poverty my mother Jacquelin Mary not only consumed poison but also gave me poison for committing suicide. While my mother died I was saved by the hospital'.³ Compensation has been given at times to the families of suicides

In Chhattisgarh, as a result of development induced displacement, people have had no option but to resort to farming encroached land, as a result of which they face constant harassment.

³ Reginamary, handloom weaver, at Trichy.

The impact of globalisation will be experienced by people differently, depending largely on their initial position, and how vulnerable they are to the 'shock' represented by globalisation. It is not possible to identify any one sector as being more adversely impacted than the others: whether it is agriculture, manufacturing or services, there are groups of workers whose earnings are extremely low and barely enough for survival, who are unable to find any other source of income, and who find themselves in an institutional environment that appears to be largely indifferent to their plight.

Vulnerability measures the likelihood that a shock will result in a decline in well being. The more vulnerable a person is, the lower is the level of resilience against a shock. Vulnerability is primarily a function of

- Individual, household and community asset endowment
- Insurance mechanisms
- The characteristics (severity and frequency) of shocks

The 'shock' being discussed here is the changes consequent upon globalisation, resulting in fall of income, loss of work, loss of land, etc.

Strategies that seek to reduce the risk and vulnerability associated with a shock may seek to reduce risk (risk reduction), or be prepared in advance in anticipation (risk mitigation), or be provided to reduce the impact of the shock ex-post (risk coping). In the following section, as we will see, most of the recommendations made by the jury and the workers are directed at risk reduction and risk coping.

Table1: Sector wise impact

Sector	Place	Issues raised
Agriculture and plantation crops	Kerala Tamil Nadu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fall in prices with removal of import restrictions - Machines used for planting, weeding, harvesting, threshing have displaced labour - Use of hybrid seeds (Monsanto cotton) has led to fields becoming infertile
Quarry workers	Tamil Nadu	Machines for cutting granite have displaced labour
Prawn farming (those affected by)	Tamil Nadu	Contamination of natural resources, depletion of ground water and salinity of drinking water in the areas around
Handloom weavers	Tamil Nadu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Removal of subsidies and rebates to handlooms make it difficult to compete with powerloom production - Shortage of yarn for handloom weavers
Match industry	Tamil Nadu	- Machines have come into use to make match boxes, displacing labour
Jewel makers	Tamil Nadu	Machines for making jewels have displaced labour
Cochin Economic Zone	Kerala	- Workers are employed on contract/ temporary basis and there is no job security. Labour laws are not being implemented.
Tie and dye (bandhej)	Rajasthan	- Machines for embroidery and design have displaced labour
Cobblers	Tamil Nadu	- High quality leather is being exported and leather products imported, as well as more synthetic products on the market, leading to reduction in demand for leather slippers and fall in work
Bamboo	Kerala	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shortage of raw materials because of an increased demand for bamboo from paper manufacturers - Fall in demand for products as a result of competition with bamboo products from Assam and synthetic products
Synthetic gem cutting	Tamil Nadu	- Reduction in demand and hence in work due to competition from cheaper stones imported from Taiwan and China
Construction workers	Tamil Nadu	- Introduction of Ready mix Concrete machines has displaced labour
Tailors	Tamil Nadu	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reduction in demand due to competition from ready made garments both domestic and imported - Mechanization in garment production leading to job losses
Sanitary workers	Coimbatore	- Loss of jobs since contract given to private company
Women workers	Chhatisgarh	Loss of land for dams, irrigation, quarrying with token money compensation
Women in Chhatisgarh	Chhatisgarh	Rape incidents, increased use of contractors from alien social backgrounds, lack of security for women.

Table 2: Sources of vulnerability

The problem	location	Issue
Quarrying leases earlier given to DW CRA (women's) groups now given to others	Chennai	Politicisation?
Powerloom products are certified as handloom making unfair competition in categories reserved for handloom products	Chennai	Corruption?
No benefits	Various	Lack of any welfare schemes
Inability to find other work	Various	No alternative skills
Gram Panchayat and Bamboo Corporation could have been pro-active in helping to seek out new markets, but have not; Bamboo Workers Welfare Fund is not functioning	Kerala	Ineffective institutions
Fisherwomen had insured fish against floods, claim made 6-7 years ago, not yet settled	Bihar	Insurance claims not being speedily processed
Wage discrimination – women paid less than men, and both less than minimum wage	Bihar, Kerala	Labour laws not implemented
Landlord makes no contribution to farming expenses, demands more than stipulated share	Bihar	Infringement of sharecropping law
Low levels of schooling, health	Chhatisgarh	Limited facilities
Huge delays in the registration of fisherwomen by the Co-operative Department Supportive actions like building an embankment to prevent loss of fish during floods not taken	Bihar	Unresponsive administration
Beedi workers not receiving benefits to which they are entitled	Tamil Nadu	Poor outreach of welfare fund

III. Recommendations of the workers and the jury

Faced with these problems, the workers themselves had some recommendations which were presented to the jury, and the jury at each place developed a set of recommendations for the government and other concerned agencies. Three of the hearings were held in Tamil Nadu. The recommendations of the National Commission for Women were considered and a point by point response sent on behalf of the Tamil Nadu government. Overall, the government was sympathetic. Their response can be summarised as follows:

- (a) Certain suggestions were not seen as being within the purview of the state government (including the banning of mechanization in construction, treating khadi as a priority sector, banning imports of foreign cloth, of finished and semi-finished diamonds, prohibiting the sale of Monsanto seeds in Tamil Nadu)
- (b) The Labour Department would ensure that the existing legislation regarding payment of minimum wages, etc would be implemented
- (c) Training and quality upgradation measures had been introduced in several sectors including tea, gem cutting
- (d) Some of the allegations made by the workers were disputed (eg harassment of pavement vendors) or considered unreasonable. For example, the banning of private contractors in stone quarrying.
- (e) Some suggestions were considered financially unviable, eg giving rice at Rs 2 per kilo and providing 30 kilos free rice per month to those below the poverty line, and free dhoti/saree every year.

This section is based on the various suggestions made by the jury, as well as the official response, and is intended to facilitate discussion on the possible approaches to reducing the adverse impacts of globalization processes and enabling workers to cope with unanticipated changes without inordinate hardship.

At the hearings, the experts and jury agreed that employment, with minimum wages, must be ensured to all. The recommendations made can be placed in three groups, that is, markets (including issues of regulation), technology and skills, and social protection (including labour laws). As far as markets are concerned, the general tenor of the recommendations is to argue that the official policy must protect the livelihoods and work opportunities for the poor, and that this can only be done by reversing some of the policies of liberalization.⁴ In addition, a demand is made for encouraging women's co-operatives and cottage industries, and for measures to support and encourage local, domestic, as well as export markets, as relevant.

While recognizing that technical change cannot be stopped, and that workers need to be encouraged to acquire new skills and recognize the need for multi skilling, some

⁴ However there is one dissenting note in the Thrissur public hearing. Justice Aravindaksha Menon pointed out that it could not be said that globalization had been thrust on the population as it is a policy adopted by a democratically elected government.

specific recommendations to limit the impact of technical change (for example in the construction industry) have been made.

A wide range of recommendations are on different aspects of social protection, to provide different types of support to workers and their families.

In its response, the Tamil Nadu government has indicated clearly that some of the suggestions are matters of national policy and the state government cannot take any action – in particular this refers to the demands made to ban imports of various products (see above).

An indicative list of the recommendations made is included below:

Markets and Regulation

A larger number of quarry leases have been given to private contractors in the last few years; recommended that as far as possible all leases be given to DWCRA groups and women's co-operatives.

To ensure that the reservations for handlooms are adhered to, the Inspection/ Textile committee must have representation of the handloom weavers. Surprise visits should be conducted on a regular basis. Items reserved for handloom sector should not be allowed to be imported. Restoration of subsidies and rebates, and immediate payment of arrears of the same should be ensured to prevent further starvation and penury of the workers and their families.

Government should build support measures for the creation of workers co-operatives and assist in the marketing of products.

Licenses to be given to pavement vendors and space for vending to be earmarked.

Subsidies and working capital for the Khadi industry to be released at the earliest. Imports of foreign cloth to be banned.

Since we are a major tea producing country, the imports of tea should be stopped, and exports promoted by improving quality of tea. A minimum price of Rs 15 per kg for green leaf to be paid to tea growers to enable development of tea plantation. Instead of open auctions, the Government should procure tea or women's co-operatives be promoted as an alternative.

Import of pre formed and semi finished stones to be stopped, while encouraging exports to other countries. Quality of jewels to be certified by the Government.

Import of ready made clothes to be banned.

Import of sugar, rubber and other agro products be stopped forthwith. Remunerative prices to be fixed for all farm products.

Imports of matches to be stopped.

The Environment Ministry and the Pollution Control Boards at the Centre and the state level as well as the collectors to take urgent steps to stop pollution and to comply with the Supreme Court direction on the prawn farms in relation to the Pulicat lake. (Orissa). Steps for the maintenance of the lake and to increase the fish and the prawn wealth should also be taken. Subsidies to be restored and women to be provided monsoon allowance.

Where tourism is encouraged, the emergence of trafficking in drugs, prostitution, and moral degradation should be stopped.

Drawing of ground water by mineral water companies to be stopped.

Distribution of land to the landless women in their name. Panchayats to help in initial farm expenses.

Monsanto cotton seeds to be prohibited and the entry of multinationals for the purpose to be banned.

Traditional knowledge and genetic resources should be protected from bio-piracy.

Encourage government departments to use bamboo products such as bamboo ply mats.

Promote cottage industries.

Promotion of local markets.

Ban on commercial sale of liquor.

Technology and skills

Construction workers have been displaced by mechanization of various tasks. It is recommended that works involving plinth of 5000 sq ft or less, may be kept reserved for manual labour, and construction with the use of machines be prohibited.

Steps to be taken to develop skills – new as well as up grading existing skills. Also ensuring the marketability of alternative skills and products

Mechanisation of match industry to be stopped.

Cobblers to be given training to make leather products other than shoes and chappals.

Multi skilling to be encouraged.

Invest in research and development to improve quality of products, eg bamboo.

Social protection

Implementation of existing labour laws: Plantation Labour Act, Minimum Wage Act, Industrial Dispute Act, Payment of Gratuity Act, Payment of Bonus Act, Kerala Agricultural Labour Act. Law defining migration should be framed; steps taken to curb violence and discrimination against migrant workers.

Procedures to guarantee transparency in identification and implementation of schemes for destitutes, widows, and other vulnerable sections should be introduced.

Legal literacy campaign should be undertaken.

Housing, health, education and transport facilities to be assured to workers.

Village health services to be adequately staffed and provided with all necessary amenities and facilities.

In addition to free government facilities, private hospitals and schools should also set aside a proportion of their facilities for free or subsidized use.

Child care needs to be treated as a priority

To tackle indebtedness, government should write off interest that farmers are forced to pay and give time to pay back the actual amount.

Contract system in force in Chennai Municipality to be stopped and scavengers and sweepers to be regularized.

Slum dwellers to be given title to land.

Provision of housing and payment of non-employment allowance to women to be considered.

Compensation of Rs 2 lakhs must be paid to families of those who committed suicide; ex gratia payment of Rs 10,000 to each family per annum till employment is restored to them.

Free, compulsory and quality education and skill training to children of weavers.

For immediate relief, Rs 10,000 to be paid to Khadi workers in addition to 20 kg of free rice, and facilities of ESI, PF.

Water, drinking water, electricity should be ensured to villagers while encouraging tourism.

In conclusion, it is apparent that the success of globalisation in regard to macro economic performance has not translated into positive benefits for large sections of the population. The public hearings clearly showed the helplessness of poor workers in the face of macro policy changes that have led to a loss of livelihood for them. The intervention of the state is necessary in this situation. What needs to be discussed is what specific measures need to be taken,

- what measures can be taken to assure marketability of products made by the poor and/or prevent a change in resource use that adversely impacts on livelihoods
- what measures will best ensure that workers are not unduly dependent on one source of income, and/or are able to access other work in case the primary source collapses
- how best can we ensure a minimum level of community/ state protection for those who are unable to cope with loss of work

Some suggested ways to take forward these concerns include

- a. Strengthening regional alliances. Globalization needs regulation. Regional alliances between countries that are similarly affected can be one way of coping better with the impact of globalisation.
- b. Supporting processes that engender global trade agreements and treaties
- c. Strengthening the implementation and monitoring of gender equality and rights based policies and programmes
- d. Strengthening co-operation between Governments, communities civil society organisations and corporate sector to address the determinants of gender inequality and poverty
- e. Encourage empowerment of informal women workers through strengthened networks
- f. Introduce and implement a system of social protection for all.

Documents consulted

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2. Report of the Public Hearing in Trissur, Kerala, 26-27 Sept 2001, organized by SEWA Kerala, Kerala Stree VEDI
3. Public Hearing in Raipur, Chhattisgarh, 26 March 2004, organised by Rupantar.
4. Public Hearing in Trichy, 15 Sept 2002; Coimbatore 16 Sept 2002; Chennai 17 sept 2002, organized by Women's Struggle Committee, Joint Action Committee of Unorganised Workers.
5. Action taken report sent by the Government of Tamil Nadu on the recommendations contained in the report in 4 above.
6. Public Hearing with bamboo workers in Malayattor, Kerala, 26 Sept 2003.
7. Public Hearing with share croppers and fisherwomen, Patna, 22 March 2004.

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Annex I: Selected Macro Economic Indicators, 1990-91 to 2003-04

	Exports/GDP	Imports/GDP	External debt/GDP	Current Account Balance/GDP	Import cover (in months)	FDI (USD billion)	Foreign Exchange Reserves (USD billion)
1990-91	5.8	8.8	28.7	-3.1	2.5	0.10	5.8
1991-92	6.9	7.9	38.7	-0.3	5.3	0.13	9.2
1992-93	7.3	9.6	37.5	-1.7	4.9	0.32	9.8
1993-94	8.3	9.8	33.8	-0.4	8.6	0.59	19.3
1994-95	8.30	11.13	30.8	-1.00	8.4	1.31	25.2
1995-96	9.10	12.30	27	-1.66	6	2.14	21.7
1996-97	8.86	12.70	24.5	-1.20	6.5	2.82	26.4
1997-98	8.71	12.49	24.3	-1.34	6.9	3.56	29.4
1998-99	8.29	11.49	23.4	-0.98	8.2	2.46	32.5
1999-00	8.40	12.39	22.2	-1.05	8.2	2.16	38.0
2000-01	9.82	12.96	22.3	-0.78	8.6	4.03	42.3
2001-02	9.39	12.04	20.7	0.16	11.3	6.13	54.1
2002-03	10.30	12.80	20.2	0.80	13.8	4.66	76.1
2003-04P	10.4	13.2	17.6	1.4	17	4.68	112.9

Source: RBI Annual Report (various Issues)

Annex 2: Wage rates as reported in Public Hearings (Kerala 2002)

	1997	1999	2002	Ratio of wages in 2002 to wages in 1997/99
Construction workers		Rs 400 per week	Rs 140 per week	0.35
Handloom workers	Rs 650 per 'pavu' (20 m) or 5-7 days		Rs 200-250 per pavu	0.3-0.4
Tea plantation labour		Rs 70 per day	Rs 40 per day	0.57
Spinners and weavers	Rs 250-300 per week		Rs 120 per week	0.4

Annex 3

Sectors represented in the public hearings:

Primary

Sharecroppers
Fisherwomen
Farmers and farm labour
Quarry workers
Tea growers, tea garden workers
Plantation workers
Fish processing

Secondary

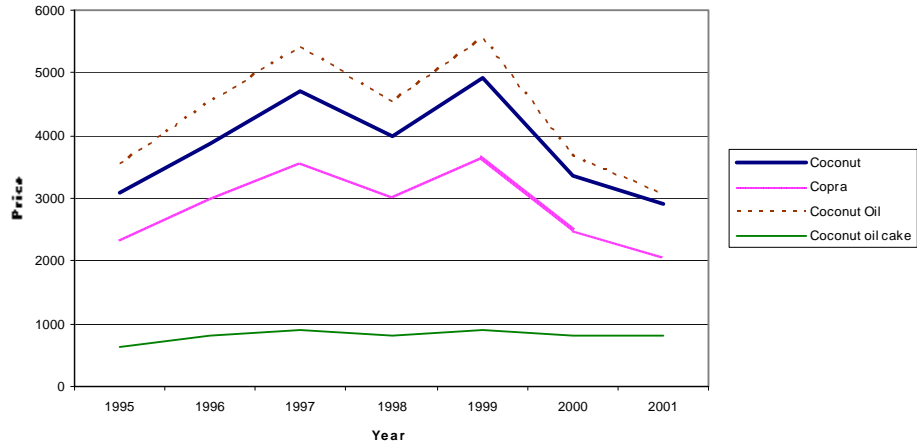
Bamboo crafts workers
Synthetic gem cutting workers
Handloom weavers
Beedi workers
Jewel makers
Khadi, spinning and weaving workers
Match workers
Workers in the Special Economic Zone, Cochin
Bandhej (tie and dye) workers

Tertiary

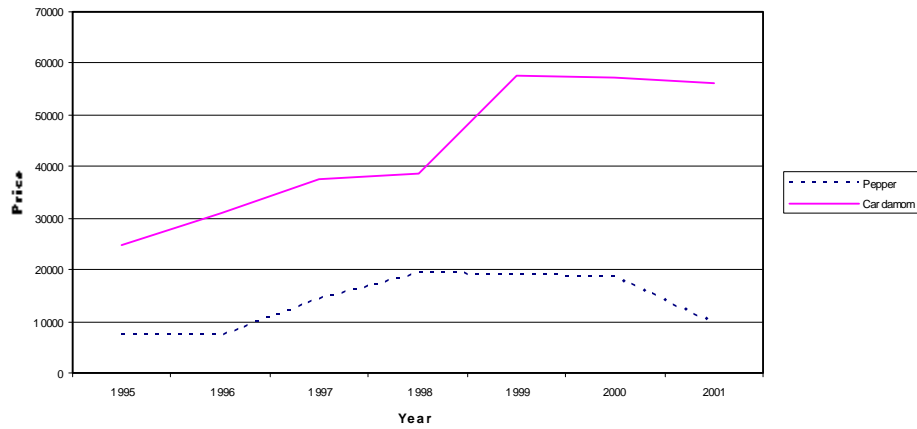
Construction workers
Tailoring workers
Cobblers
Sweepers
Street vendors
Contract labour
Porters

Annex 4

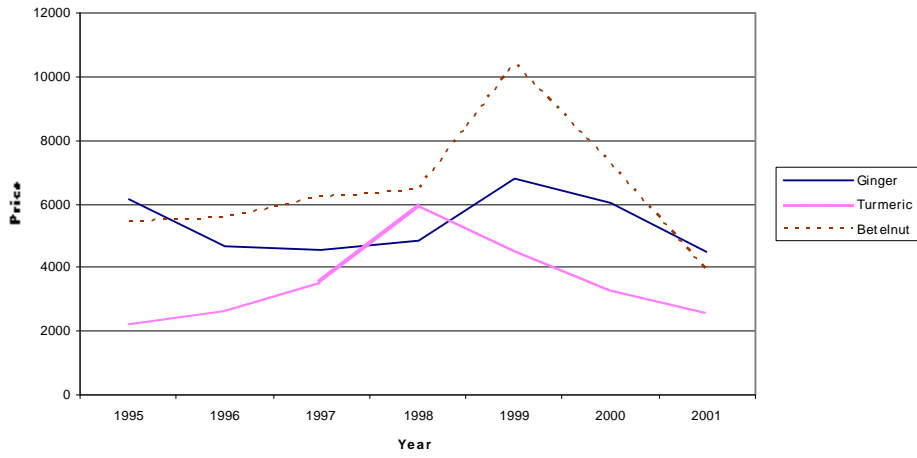
Yearly domestic average wholesale price of various crops since 1995



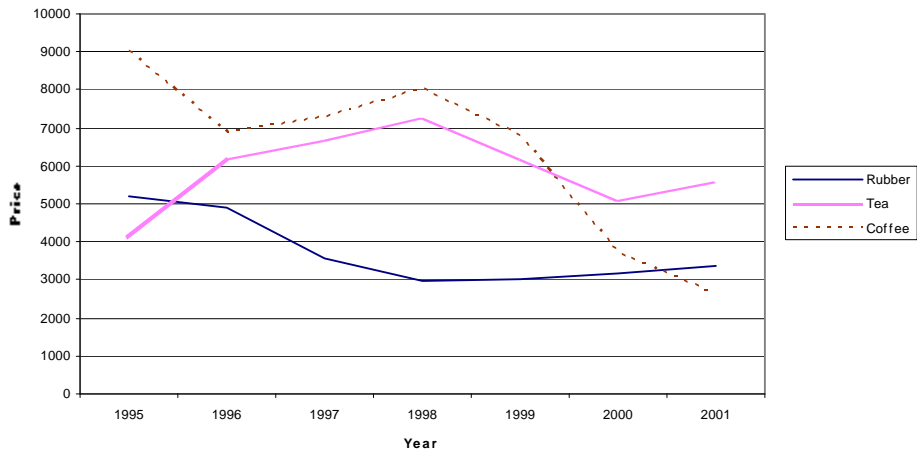
Yearly domestic average wholesale price of various crops since 1995



Yearly domestic average wholesale price of various crops since 1995



Yearly domestic average wholesale price of various crops since 1995



Source : State Agricultural Prices Board, Thiruvananthapuram