

Gender And Development In The View Of Globalization

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Abstract: Throughout process of globalization, development change has been implemented and sought after in order to improve the living conditions of the worldwide population. Whether or not this has been attained is a broad subject, but what I would like to focus on this paper is the extent this developmental plan has involved and affected the lives of women in developing and third countries. In this respect, I would like to show the development change has been implemented to offer economic advantage to the country, but that more often than not, globalization has increased the economic debt and dependence of the country in general, and has negatively impacted women's role in particular. This paper will focus in extent to which market economy has affected positively and negatively the lives of the women.

Keywords: Globalization, Development, NGO

I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization was born as an economic theory of development in the light of the new trade agreements worldwide. In addition to aiding international trade relations within developed countries, globalization was seen as process through which third world itself would profit and would emerge from a position of underdevelopment. However, as discussed by Philip McMichael in Development and Social Change the globalization is referred to as "an old wine in a new bottle" in respect to its similarities with the capitalist system.

II. WOMAN POSITION IN THE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

What is the women's position in this prospective developmental project? Three dominant criteria are outlined as guidelines for the progress of this project applied by the two most important NGO's: International Monetary Fund (IMF) or World Bank (WB):

- ✓ Free wage labor
- ✓ Freedom of capital to exploit labor and;
- ✓ Maximization of profit.

As one might imagine, all three criteria have influenced more negatively that positively a women's position in the

process of development. Development has brought forth advances in education of women enrollment schools. As many studies have suggested, the increase in education of women causes a decrease in their birthrates. In Philip McMichael's Development and Social Change, it is stated: "The 1992 World Bank reports pointed out that women without secondary education, on average, have seven children; if almost half of this women receive secondary education the average decline to three children per women. This has been made possible through the extensive work of various. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) that have imparted in these women the knowledge and greater responsibility of their role in society. As a result, women have become more selective in their choices and their life. Specifically, a woman is now able to be part of the decision making process regarding family planning. A decrease in birthrate allows for better life conditions for their children, better education and better preparation for life within an organized society. In this respect, the position of women within a family has improved because women play a very important role within this social structure. A good and functioning society has as its main indicators a good and functioning family structure, which explains why a women's role within the family is such a good indicator of social development. In other words, development has granted her the credits of her role within a family and within society, a role which was previously left unmarked.

As the education of women is more widespread in urban versus rural settings, the difference in their family role and life expectancy is more pronounced. In *The changing status of women in India: Impact of urbanization and development* the authors report that women and men in rural India have come to enjoy longer life expectancy, when compared with women and men in rural India, and also men in urban India. Considering that males and females are likely to have better access to medical facilities and sanitation in cities and towns, the significant factor which improves female life expectancy is probably the higher level of literacy and education among urban women compared with those living in rural areas. As the author continues, "Better education enables a woman to appreciate the importance of her own health for the well-being of her family, and she can therefore discuss her health care needs, including personal hygiene more openly with males in the family, or with her own doctor. Moreover, an educated woman is more likely to adopt family planning to restrict the family size, thereby reducing the risks to health because of frequent pregnancies" (Gosh, R.N., and K.C. Roy).

Also, women's active presence in the workforce has contributed to their progress as individuals. Previously they were unable to speak their mind or break free from an abusive relationship because of their economic dependence towards the partner which included the need for food, shelter and education of their children. In post-communist Albanian society (Mediterranean country) women's professional position underwent a change. During the communist system women were part of the workforce, but rather than being able to choose a vocation they were forced to do manual labor as directed by the image and the role of that period. With the establishment of a democratic government, a number of international agencies established their aid in Albania, especially towards women. In this respect, they received professional training and various workshops that empowered their minds as to what they could accomplish professionally as women. In addition, these international agencies offered employment opportunities for them. As such, the women's professional and economic advancement helped them towards greater independence in society.

Despite, some positive aspects of women's development in the wake of globalization, the woman's status has not significantly changed. In many respects, progress has taken primitive form and has been done in small steps in regards to the benefit on women. As we have seen in various class documentaries, the conditions of development set by International Monetary Fund (IMF) or World Bank (WB) did not give the predicted or intended results. Specifically, women are placed in low-paid state sector of the economy under draining conditions of work. As result, these women has become the perfect contractual workforce for maximizing profits. In a documentary supporting this issue, it is shown that sweatshop plantation in the Philippines where women were laboring, the corporation drew together the poorest women from the rural setting. Because of World Trade Organization (WTO) standards of operation, it is very easy for them to transfer their capital somewhere else where they could find a cheaper workforce. As a result, the Global Manager's Policies left the Philippines and their employees with no investment and in miserable conditions. It is evident that development is

far from what this investment project could be called because the women were taken from self-sustainability into complete dependence and later abandonment. It thus appears that WTO is placing projects in the third world that will make them more economically dependent towards the developed world.

Additionally, owing to her inherited role in society and to the position third world families are placed during globalization, a women worker is not able to vocalize and demand her right in the workplace. Specifically, the same policy from the international corporations that suppresses and exploits the women's work has caused the emigration of men for the purpose of gaining more income to support the family. As discussed by Svetlana V. Kupryashkina in *Women in the Ukraine, Trends and Tendencies in the Labor Market*, in a way, this places the main burden of raising children in the shoulders of women. Thus even if women would like to stay home to raise their children, the hard economic conditions force them to work because of their input into the family budget. Furthermore, they are unable to gather in unions and organized societies that would otherwise effectively demand for equal job conditions. Due to the poor conditions of the country and to the fact that their sole means of surviving is employment in the international corporation, a woman has no choice but to submit.

III. WOMEN IN THEIR WORK

The degree of satisfaction that women feel in their work should be considered a reflection of the level of women's social status and of society as a whole. In *Women in the Ukraine, Trends and Tendencies in the Labor Market*, the author states that 58 percent of women claim to be not satisfied with the financial side of their work. Further analysis into the statistics of women in the labor market in Ukraine demonstrates that the position of women in recent years has undergone a serious transformation. For the most part, they are working in the low-paid sector of the economy and the income level of working women is 30 percent lower than that of men. Also, it is revealed that due to the low average salary, which is not enough to satisfy even minimum living requirements, 12-30 percent of women, depending on the age group, are obliged to look for secondary employment. In addition, many women who would not look for job otherwise due to family responsibilities are now forced into the market by the deteriorating state of the economy. With no educational support, low qualification and less pay, the situation has led to the marginalization of women's labor. In fact, in this study, 19 percent of women respondents remarked that absence of necessary education was a problem. If the necessary structural and economic changes were made concurrently to developmental projects, women would benefit directly and would contribute substantially in national economy.

Research from countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America has shown that the impact of market reforms is almost inevitably gender-differentiated, and the results for the majority of women are at best mixed, if not uniformly negative. When market reforms are combined with an International Monetary Fund-mandated structural adjustment program, the results for a woman and for the vast majority of

the population can be disastrous. The post-Soviet Union Russia is no exception. As Ann Hibner Koblitz puts it in *Women Under Perestroika and Doi Moi, A Comparison of Marketization of Russia and Vietnam*, “the transition to market economy has had an enormous impact on the lives of Russians, and a profoundly negative effect on woman in particular”. According to the author, although the impact of the economic reforms has been different in different sectors of the labor force, due to women’s concentration in fixed income jobs, they are being disproportionately impoverished. Additionally, a number of sector of the labor force traditionally considered female such as textiles, service professions, have been less able to negotiate even minimal increases.

The transition to a market economy has also forced a lot of women in third world countries and developing countries to see jobs against their moral view norms as a viable alternative. As Ann Hibner Koblitz states, “jobs for women in the newly privatized firms are almost entirely at the bottom of the ladder, tied to looks and youth or highly exploitative in other ways”. As she further reports, “women can be requested to send in full bathing suit photo with their job applications where want ads virtually always specify sex, and the cut-off age for women is generally thirty”. As such, many young, women are beginning to feel that their only way out is to sell themselves as a career possibility (Cowell; Kristof).

As globalization takes over the world (through the policies of WB and IMF), many countries have experiences a decrease and devaluation of the local economy concurrently with foreign investments. As result, the country’s capita income and local currency falls and the country is subject of hyperinflation. As an example the Russian capita fell 17 percent from 1991 to 1992; Russian real wages in 1993 were 61 percent of real wages in 1990; also, in 1992 the ruble dropped from a penny to under one-fifth of one cent (Bohlen; Stevenson). As a consequence, women’s income fell from 70 percent of men’s to 40-50 percent. Thus, we notice that the policies of globalization are bringing more economical strain in women than men. Furthermore, in many developing and third world countries we are noticing that privatization is being conceived as male process. As such, heads of private enterprises have a tendency to refer to their work as a “man’s job” and there are less likely to hire women. The gender-income gap observed in countries such as Russia is hurting not only women but also their dependents. This is because many studies have shown that the female income is more likely to go towards family needs than is the male income (Van Esterik; Jacobson). As such, the increasing gendered salary suggests that the well-being of the family is likely to decrease with the decrease of the income generating capabilities of the women. However, in Vietnam we find a country where regardless of similar economic changes to Russia, the women groups have responded more effectively (Ann Hibner; Koblitz). In Vietnam, we will see that gender impact has not very been very marked, or at least, that women movements have been able to target and fight the dangers of globalization. Here there exists a central and most popular women’s organization called Vietnam Women’s Union (VWU). They are constantly involved in rural income-generating projects as well as urban retraining programs and regardless of deteriorating health

levels, they are managing to increase the number of women with access to cheap pre-natal care.

But why is this globalization impact so different here? There are three factors that have caused the VWU activist to become aware of the dangers to women that are inherent in marketization and in the economic and cultural opening to the west (Ann Hibner; Koblitz).

Firstly, many of these women studied and visited a number of Eastern European and former USSR countries during socialist period in order to get more acquainted with post-socialist developments such as the deterioration in women’s material and social conditions in those countries.

Secondly, the experiences of VWU activists in Southern Vietnam with decreasing female illiteracy and unemployment have sensitized them to associated problems of globalization.

A third and very important factor enhancing their awareness is the proximity to a country which is suffering extensively in this regard: namely, Thailand. Thailand has been deeply devastated by the ecological destruction of the country-side, the pollution, prostitution and drug addiction in the cities, as well as the AIDS epidemic (Koblitz). All of these factors have contributed to their determination to find a solution or alleviate problems associated with development. But awareness and good will do not lead to a solution unless there is support from the government. This is precisely the case in Vietnam, where the government donated to the VWU money for the credit program design to benefit poor women and initially subsidized their clinics and prenatal programs. As well, a number of changes were done in Family Law that strengthen women’s right in the workplace and within the family (Koblitz). All of these elements resulted in a women’s organization with considerable support from the government and prestige from the population.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, globalization was manifested in many countries as failed developmental project, at last in regards to boosting the local economy and improving the lives of the population. Women, as an important element of society, are not excluded in regards to the negative effects of developmental policies. On the contrary, in most cases they are largely marginalized in the market economy. This marginalization comes not only as direct result of the politics of globalization but also as result of the lack of governmental advocacy. The moderate success in Vietnam is due to the selective application of the globalization project in areas of benefit them. In these countries the stress in household economy, informal sector, family agriculture and on light industry as opposed to heavy industry has led towards a more favorable appreciation of the women’s contributions to the economy. What I am trying to suggest is that in the context of gender and development a women’s rights should be more than a declaration, they should be placed within a practical frame that takes into account their role and they are the best set to offer to the economy. This, coupled with strong grassroots organizations and governmental support, might alleviate gender disparities and other negative effects of development. In time of uncertainty, fear of social change

rises as does fear of feminist agendas. This and some other cases show that feminist involvement in different aspects of life are more complicated than recognizing and readdressing gender-oppression through the reversal of gender subordinating policies and the diffusion of gender equality norms. Instead, gender subordination is often partial, subtle, and hybrid, both in its performance and in its results. When women's influence increases, it strengthens and increases economic stability and democratic order. In societies where women have social, political and economic power, there is a strong consistency for democracy and human rights. Furthermore, in the light of woman's rights, further efforts are needed to influence policy and regulations and to establish accountability in woman's equality.

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