

# Looking at the Economy through Women's Eyes

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**A facilitator's guide for economic literacy**

**published by Banúlacht**

written by Maeve Taylor

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**Note on sources:** *Each module has a section on resources and further reading, which lists the sources for the material quoted. Much of the context material in this guide has been drawn together and compiled from existing resources. The introduction to economic literacy draws on and develops material from an Economic Literacy Manual written by Mariama Williams for WIDE in 1997. The module on gender budgeting is largely based on the work of Diane Elson and Debbie Budlender, published by the Commonwealth Secretariat, and Helena Hofbauer Balmori's work for BRIDGE. The module on trade draws on the work of WIDE, on Mariama Williams's recent work, also published by the Commonwealth Secretariat, and on advocacy material produced by the Trade Matters umbrella group of Irish NGOs. The module on human rights is uses some material originally written by Niamh Reilly and Maeve Taylor for the Women's Human Rights Alliance. Some of the training activities are based on material from the OXFAM Gender Training Manual and the WIDE Economic Literacy manual, as well as material developed by the women who have facilitated Banúlacht training on economic literacy and gender analysis: Emily Kawano, Mary Quinlan, Nelcia Robinson, Christine Murray, Niamh Gaynor, Eileen Smith and Folade Mutota.*

### *About Banúlacht*

**Banúlacht** is a feminist development education organisation that works with locally based women's organisations in Ireland. Banúlacht's particular focus is linking local and global issues in solidarity with Southern women's organisations. These issues include gender and trade, gender budgeting, gender mainstreaming and women's human rights.

In challenging global processes which engender power relationships, Banúlacht's work is based on a commitment to new kinds of global relationships informed by solidarity.

Our economic literacy work is one aspect of this commitment.

### *About the Author*

**Maeve Taylor** has worked as a facilitator with Banúlacht's economic literacy programme since its inception. She has extensive experience of solidarity work in Nicaragua and development education work in Ireland. She represents Banúlacht in Trade Matters, the umbrella group of Irish NGOs working on trade policy in Ireland, and Women in Development Europe (WIDE). She has a masters degree in human rights law, and is a member of the advisory group of the Women's Human Rights Alliance.

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# Part 1

Overview of the facilitator's guide

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**Methodology: An approach to the  
process of economic literacy**

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- 1. Banúlacht's training methodology**
- 2. Who is the facilitator's guide for?**
- 3. Structure of the guide**
- 4. How to use the guide**
- 5. Some points for facilitators**

# An approach to the process of economic literacy

This facilitator's guide has been published with the aim of enabling facilitators, tutors, adult educators, community development workers and development educators to carry out economic literacy training from a feminist perspective. The training methodology and workshop resources in the facilitator's guide are based on Banúlacht's experience of developing and delivering economic literacy training. Banúlacht has organised 35 workshops on economic literacy with 21 different women's organisations since 1999. Through the training, participants have come to recognise their own knowledge of the economy. They have recognised their right to critique government policy based on their lived experience of the economy. Crucially, they have explored frameworks with which to analyse and critique economic policy.

The facilitator's guide is a compilation of resources and activities that have been tried and developed through interaction with these women.

## 1. Banúlacht's training methodology

Feminism is a mode of analysis, a method of approaching life and politics, a way of asking questions and searching for answers, rather than a set of political conclusions about the oppression of women. Banúlacht's training methodology aims to reflect this way of asking questions and searching for answers. It is based on a participant-centred model, starting with the personal and linking women's personal experience with national and global trends and policies. The activities in this facilitator's guide range from story-telling and drama to discussions on economic concepts and policy issues. Each activity section begins by facilitating groups to explore their own experiences of the economy and then to explore how prevailing economic policy has influenced that experience. From there, activities develop to provide spaces for women to critique current policy and to explore their vision of an alternative economy.

One of Banúlacht's approaches to economic literacy is to link the training to the advocacy work of women's groups. By grounding the training in the internationally agreed principles of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination Against Women and the strategies and actions of the Beijing Platform for Action, we have provided tools and frameworks that women's groups can then use to inform their lobbying work.

## 2. Who is the facilitator's guide for?

This facilitator's guide is intended for trainers or facilitators who already have experience and skills in planning training sessions and in group facilitation and presentation. The material is suitable for groups who want to develop basic awareness on the issues. You could use the activities in the facilitator's guide either to facilitate discussions on the economy or to facilitate participants who want to feel confident using economic terminology. You do not need to have studied economics or development studies to facilitate economic literacy training. The training is as much about developing the facilitator's as the trainee's confidence to engage with the material. The more you read on the topics covered, the better you will be able to facilitate discussion, to present the policy terminology and to respond to issues raised by groups.

## 3. Structure of the guide

Part 1 is an overview of economic literacy from two perspectives: Methodology and concepts and analyses. Part 1 presents the thinking that informs the modules in Part 2. Part 2 is organised around five concept areas, each focusing on a different theme:

### Module 1

#### Gender, care and the economy

This module introduces the concepts of gender, patriarchy and gender analysis. It explores what the economy is and why women should care about it. It also introduces the idea of the 'care economy' and the value placed on caring in society and the economy.

### Module 2

#### Economic growth: A measure of well-being?

This module focuses on how the economy is measured. It explains and critiques the standard measures of economic growth and compares them with notions of well being. It analyses what is included and what is omitted from measures of economic growth and explores the value systems behind these measures from a feminist perspective.

### Module 3

#### Gender budgeting

This module explores the idea of gender-sensitive budgets as a potentially powerful strategy to achieve the implementation of economic rights and gender equality. It uses a range of examples from different countries to show how women's organisations have developed tools to influence national budgets and spending by local authorities.

### Module 4

#### Globalisation and trade

This module highlights the increasing importance of international trade. It explains the policies of 'free trade' or 'trade liberalisation' and questions the assumptions of policy makers that trade policy is 'gender neutral'. It looks at how decisions on trade policy are made and by whom and examines the impacts of trade policy on women, especially women in the South.

### Module 5

#### Challenging neo-liberalism: A human rights approach

This module presents a feminist approach to human rights and introduces the notion of economic rights as integral to women's human rights. It presents an overview of the international human rights frameworks of the United Nations system and relates human rights to the economy.

Each of the modules covers one major concept area and opens with a conceptual overview designed to give facilitators a broad understanding of key concepts and terminology. Throughout the concept section, there are quotations from the main resources used for the module, or from feminist thinkers and activists. The concept section is followed by a section with references for the main sources used in the module, web addresses for organisations working on the issues and suggestions for further readings. At the end of each module is a series of activities that can be used to facilitate groups in developing their analysis of the issues raised in the concept section. References are made throughout the activity sections to parts of the concept section that can be used to make inputs during workshops or training courses.

#### 4. How to use the guide

The opening concept section in each module covers sufficient material to allow you to facilitate a group through the activities that follow it. You should familiarise yourself thoroughly with the concept section before facilitating the activities in any of the modules. *Copies of the concept section should be made for each participant and distributed at the beginning of the workshop.* The quotations in the margins can be written on a flip chart and discussed as warm-up exercises during the workshops. In the margins of the guide, you will find occasional questions

designed to stimulate discussions and critical thinking about the material.

This facilitator's guide takes a holistic approach to the economy. The topics covered are all linked, so it is advisable to read the introduction and all five concept sections before carrying out any training. The more you read on each topic, the richer your understanding of the issues will be.

In the activity section, it is assumed that the facilitator is familiar with both the preceding module and with Part 1, which is relevant to each of the five modules. Where it is useful to read ahead to another module, or refer back to a previous module, this is indicated at the beginning of the activity.

In order to allow each facilitator to have the flexibility to develop a programme based on the needs and interests of a particular group, the facilitator's guide does not propose rigid workshop outlines. Instead, each activity is presented with a number of variations, some guidelines as to how it could be facilitated and suggestions about the resources that facilitators and participants may find useful to engage in the activity.

## 5. Some points for facilitators

**1** Economic literacy training entails creating a space where people can engage with ideas about women and the economy. This facilitator's guide aims to provide a framework within which to facilitate discussions about women and the economy. Economic literacy is a process. It does not attempt to provide a definitive feminist analysis of the economy. Nor does it aim to provide all the answers to all questions on the economy. As a facilitator, it is your role to engage participants with the topics and the analysis presented and to facilitate participants to come to their own analysis. Often, the most appropriate response to a challenging question is 'What do you think?' When presenting different economic models, whether 'mainstream' or 'alternative', give the participants time to discuss what they think of the model. Allow space for groups to come up with their own alternative models.

**2** Economics is not presented as a discrete discipline, relating only to supply and demand and revenue and expenditure policy. It is important to recognise that the economy is a social and political construct. Women's experiences of the influence of the Church and the availability of contraception, for example, are as relevant in discussions of the economy as their experience of work, taxation and mortgages. In practice, this

means that discussions on the economy can easily flow into discussions on politics, health, the environment or other issues most relevant to a particular group at a particular time. This brings richness to the training, and it is up to the facilitator to decide how to let discussions develop. However, participants *have* signed up for a course on women and the economy, so it is important to highlight at the end of the discussion the ways in which the issues raised intersect with discussions about the economy.

**3** The language of economics can be daunting, and it is important that facilitators acknowledge this. Some participants in training sessions might resent being confronted by some of the terminology used in this guide. Banúlacht's view on using 'difficult' or 'highly technical' language is that, if explained and contextualised, it can be empowering for women's groups to spend time getting to grips with it. First, it creates a link between women's lived experience and opinions and the language of bureaucrats and policy makers, which can be powerful in validating women's knowledge and analysis. Second, it gives access to the vocabulary used by policy makers and can thereby facilitate lobbying and advocacy work.

**4** It is important not to make the economy a catch-all for all the issues that are relevant to women. Although a question about the economy can stimulate all sorts of discussions on related topics, not every issue can be neatly fitted within the framework of economic analysis. For example, there are economic dimensions to the issues of violence and racism, and so these issues intersect with discussions on the economy. However, they are highly complex issues, and analysis of those complexities is not within the scope of the material in this facilitator's guide. It is better to acknowledge that sensitively, rather than try to embrace every aspect of every issue that arises.

*We think nothing we do matters, that we can't make a difference, but we are each part of larger systems and communities. We individually contribute our attitudes, beliefs, actions, and choices to all these groups. We individually have a much greater effect than we know. All big collective changes are made up of many small individual changes.*

**V. Ray, 1992**

(We are unable to verify this source. If any reader can help, please contact us.)

**5** Economic literacy is as much about politics as about economics. The name 'Looking at the Economy through Women's Eyes' was chosen to reflect that economic literacy training is about seeing what mainstream economists do not see (for example, women's unpaid work) and about re-visioning alternative economic systems. Banúlacht's analysis of the economy is grounded in an understanding of unequal power relations and the need for radical change to transform those power relations. This understanding is central to the training. Therefore, it is important that each training session or training course begins with gender analysis so that the group has a chance to explore their understanding of gender power relations and to name barriers to women. It is equally important to give time to discussions about how the economic system needs to be restructured and to give participants space to imagine what different systems would look like.

**6** Exploration of complex power structures and values that influence economic policies can be emotive, but should not be disempowering. In order to ensure that participants do not feel disheartened or powerless, a space should be created where groups identify where they do have power, and how they can take action, even at a very local level. The facilitator has a key role in situating what might seem to be small or isolated actions in the context of broader social movements. It is therefore recommended that facilitators include activities from the human rights module in any workshop or training course, and use the web sites listed in the reference sections to find up to date examples of activism from the global women's movement.

# Part 1

Overview of the facilitator's guide

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**Economic literacy from a feminist  
perspective: Some concepts and analyses**

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1. **Origins and development of Banúlacht's economic literary programme**
  2. **Core principles of Banúlacht's approach to training**
  3. **Economic literacy as a tool for challenging economic policy**
  4. **Economic literacy as part of a global movement**
  5. **Some basic economic concepts**
  6. **How this guide approaches the economy**
  7. **References, resources and further reading**

# Economic literacy from a feminist perspective: Some concepts and analysis

Training programmes on economic literacy from a gender perspective have been carried out by women's organisations in many countries. In using the term 'literacy' we do not intend to imply that participants are 'illiterate' about the economy. In this guide 'literacy' is used to refer to an adult education process that is grounded in the values of community development and aims to facilitate critical engagement with ideas. This kind of education is based on the ideas of Paolo Freire. It challenges underlying power relations in society, and aims to contribute to creative and collective action for social change.

In 1998, Women in Development Europe (WIDE), a network of women's organisations working on gender and development issues, produced a pilot training manual. Through this manual, WIDE aimed to bring its work on alternative, feminist economics into an accessible programme of training for women. The manual links alternative economics from a feminist perspective and popular education methodology. As an organisation committed to linking gender analysis and development education, Banúlacht found the idea immediately attractive as a new way to bring a global focus into its work with women's organisations.

## 1. Origins and development of Banúlacht's economic literacy programme

In 1998, Banúlacht initiated a series of consultation workshops with women from community development and women's organisations as a first step towards developing an economic literacy programme relevant to the Irish context. This was facilitated by Emily Kawano, an economist and facilitator who had worked for many years at the Centre for Popular Economics in the United States. The consultation workshops identified the key issues of globalisation and the 'Celtic Tiger' as themes for the programme. Two further workshops with the WIDE Irish Platform were held to develop appropriate activities. Through this process, an initial training curriculum was drafted. This curriculum brought together Emily's expertise in using popular education techniques to raise awareness of economic issues and Banúlacht's experience in gender analysis and training.

### The training aimed to

- develop an analysis of the Irish economy and the global forces that shape it

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- raise awareness of the increasingly 'globalised' nature of the economy and the relationship between women's poverty in Ireland and countries of the South

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- explore women's role in the economy and the ways in which the current neo-liberal economic model not only perpetuates but depends on women's poverty

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- unpack the role of 'race', class and gender in the distribution of wealth and address the unequal impacts of trade and other economic policy on women and men

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- raise awareness of the Irish government's commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) in regard to poverty eradication

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- develop lobbying strategies to influence economic policy makers by using the sections of the BPfA on poverty, the economy, and power and policy making to address the gender dimensions of poverty

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Since 1999, Banúlacht has been running training programmes designed to develop women's awareness of economic issues and their capacity to engage with them. Twenty-one different women's groups and networks in Ireland have participated in the training. We have carried out day-long workshops and two or three-day courses, linking local and global economic issues. These workshops have introduced a range of concepts and terminology that can seem daunting at the outset but that can soon become familiar and manageable, as the following comments from participants show:

*'I surprised myself with what I knew and I thought it would be over my head but it's very relevant to local issues.'*

*'I used to ignore economic issues and language, but feel the system stops women from understanding the language.'*

*'We need to push for change æ for political speech to translate into political will.'*

*'I can see common issues for myself and women in other countries and I'd feel more confident now to face a politician.'*

## 2. Core principles of Banúlacht's approach to training

### *Recognising interconnections and differences*

A core principle of Banúlacht's work is that a comprehensive understanding of the conditions and possibilities of women's lives requires an engagement with the interconnections between the local, national, regional and global levels. This economic literacy facilitator's guide is particularly concerned with exploring interconnections between the situations of women in Ireland and those of women in the global South.

Women are not a homogenous group: They have different experiences, perspectives and priorities, such as those based on 'race', class, sexual orientation, disability, or geographical location. In recognising this diversity, we acknowledge that many differences are based on or experienced through relationships of inequality that must be challenged. Banúlacht's economic literacy training, informed by this analysis, recognises the links between gender oppressions and other forms of oppression. Our training aims to challenge norms and structures that privilege experiences and interests based on being male, white, settled, middle-class, heterosexual, able-bodied, and Western. In particular, it includes challenging global structural inequalities between North and South.

### *Questioning structures and power relations*

Throughout the facilitator's guide, there is tension between what can be termed liberal, radical and post-modern feminist critiques of prevailing economic policy and of economic measures. A liberal critique focuses on the condition of women within existing structures and highlights ways in which women's needs and priorities are absent from descriptions of the economy. A more radical feminist critique involves an examination of social structures and institutions and hierarchical gender relations. It examines the policies and programmes that have a broad impact in setting the conditions under which

*A liberal or traditional approach accepts patriarchal systems as they are and considers that disadvantages suffered by women can be redressed by lowering legislative barriers, rather than by restructuring systems. According to a feminist view, however, women's inferior position in all societies relative to men is a function of their lack of power, not a result of discrimination.*

Catherine MacKinnon  
**Feminism Unmodified**

communities, households and individuals function. It seeks to ensure that these institutions, policies and programmes respond to the needs and interests of women, as well as men, and distribute benefits equitably between women and men. Overall, it seeks to reduce existing disparities between women and men in incomes, resources and opportunities.

A liberal critique seeks to improve the condition of women within existing systems and institutions, whereas a radical critique challenges those systems and institutions and the underlying power relations. Some feminist economists use liberal critiques to show up the flaws in the existing economic system. However, unless this analysis is accompanied by a recognition that gender equality and women's empowerment are goals in themselves, it does not challenge the position of women. Banúlacht's approach to economic literacy has been grounded in this radical critique of power structures. It has been influenced by postmodern feminist concerns, which raise questions about how women are represented by economics and which recognise the diversity of women's experiences in relation to the economy.

### *Using language that reflects a feminist perspective*

Language has a powerful role in maintaining values and supporting systems that discriminate. It is important to challenge language that normalises unequal power

relations, reinforces patriarchy or reflects gender stereotypes, and where possible, to use language that reflects a feminist approach. In challenging global structural inequalities, we use the terms North and South in this guide rather than 'First World/Third World' or 'Developed World/Developing World', which imply superiority and inferiority. While we recognise that no terms adequately reflect diverse realities, we use 'North' to refer to the economically and politically powerful countries of North America and Europe, as well as Japan, Australia and New Zealand; and 'South' to refer to the countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Banúlacht believes that people (individuals and groups) construct themselves and are constructed in the context of power relations. We need to acknowledge the often different perspectives and experiences that people have on the basis of whether they are or feel they are part of a minority. The term 'race' is most commonly used to refer to a number of natural and distinct 'races' on the basis of biological differences. When viewed as such, differences are often assumed to be natural, unchanging and fixed, with some 'races' regarded as being superior and others inferior. Such divisions ignore the social, economic, political and cultural construction of difference. Thus, even though racism can and does exist, Banúlacht believes that 'race' as such does not exist. In a similar fashion, 'ethnicity' is also a construction that divides the world

into 'us' and 'them' and encourages a sense of 'we' who have shared interests. 'Race' and 'ethnicity' are therefore viewed by Banúlacht as constructions, not as natural categories. This is why we put the words into inverted commas where they appear in this guide.

### *Highlighting indivisibility of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights*

Women's international policy work is increasingly making the links between the advancement of women internationally and the need for governments to take a proactive stance on the implementation of women's economic rights. Banúlacht is committed to a critical holistic human rights perspective as a framework for analysis and action. This is a global vision of interconnectedness that recognises the indivisibility of civil, political, social, economic and cultural rights. It includes a critical engagement with the development of human rights frameworks, which attempt to recognise, protect and promote women's rights as human rights. Banúlacht sees a need to make links between the different experiences of women worldwide in the context of globalisation. We examine how the development priorities of the EU, for example, seemingly rooted in a human rights and poverty eradication framework, are often contradicted by a trade policy based on World Trade Organisation (WTO) regulations.

### **3. Economic literacy as a tool for challenging economic policy**

Women are not passive 'victims' of globalisation. A core principle of Banúlacht's work is that women are active agents for change. They have a key role to play in shaping the social and political contexts of their lives. Women are entitled to alternatives. They have a right to make choices about policies that impact upon them. Yet a real barrier to women's engagement with economic policy making is the elitism of economics, which makes it seem inaccessible and overwhelming. Therefore, those most adversely affected by a neo-liberal agenda are those who are likely to have least access to the concepts and skills for challenging it and creating alternatives on the basis of their knowledge and experiences.

Our aim in providing economic literacy training and in producing this facilitator's guide is to contribute to the empowerment of women. As the competence and confidence of individual women and women's organisations and networks to engage with economic policy grows, we hope that policy makers and decision makers will be able to see the economy through women's eyes.

Economic literacy aims to contribute to women's empowerment through a process of demystifying the economy. Course participants learn to analyse the global forces and the societal structures that influence how women interact with the economy. They explore ways in which women's

*Women contribute to the economy and to combating poverty through both remunerated and unremunerated work at home, in the community and in the workplace. The empowerment of women is a critical factor in the eradication of poverty.*

*Although many women have advanced in economic structures, for the majority of women particularly those who face additional barriers, continuing obstacles have hindered their ability to sustainable livelihoods for themselves and their dependents... women still also perform the great majority of unpaid domestic work and community work,*

**UN Beijing Platform for Action, 1995**

organisations can use international agreements on gender equality to strengthen their analysis of and advocacy on issues affecting women in Ireland and women in the South.

The training provides a space for women to explore how the economy works and its impact on their everyday lives. It facilitates women to explore the prevailing values that underlie economic policy and to develop their own visions of alternative value systems and economic policies.

#### 4. Economic literacy as part of a global movement

The international women's movement, informed by a human rights approach, is creating stronger networks to consolidate and strengthen alternatives to neo-liberalism built on such principles as inclusivity, participation and economic justice. However, it is crucial that women have the tools, skills and confidence to engage with policy makers in order to effect change at local, national or global levels.

International organisations – such as WIDE, the International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN), the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), the African Women's Economic Policy Network, the International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP), Asia Pacific and Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era (DAWN) – have made key contributions to developing critiques of the neo-liberal economic agenda. These organisations develop alternative ideas and lobby policy makers for a gender and human rights perspective in international economic and trade policy. Feminist economists – such as Diane Elson and Mariama Williams – have developed alternative economic analyses that challenge the assumptions of neo-liberal economics. You will find a reading list at the end of Part 1 and at the end of

each module. This list can help you to expand your knowledge of feminist approaches to economic issues. You will also find the web addresses for the organisations mentioned above and other organisations of the global women's movement. It would be very worthwhile to take some time to look up these sites in order (1) to keep up to date with new ideas on alternative visions of the economy and (2) to increase your awareness of the campaigning and lobbying activities of the women's movement globally in relation to development, trade and human rights.

## 5. Some basic economic concepts

This facilitator's guide is organised in five modules, each of which presents a different aspect of the economy. The linking thread is the assertion that prevailing economic models fail to recognise the gendered nature of society and, therefore, cannot respond to the diverse experiences, needs and priorities of women. What follows is a brief outline of the main points, which are dealt with in more detail in subsequent modules.

### *Some basic concepts in economics:*

Economics is the study of how limited resources are distributed, allocated and used by people within the economy, at the following levels:

- international or global
- 'macro' level of states
- 'meso' level of sectors and communities
- 'micro' level of households, firms and individuals

### *Gender analysis in economics seeks to*

- provide tools that can identify gender inequalities within the economy
- define gender objectives for economic policies
- develop gender indicators to monitor how gender equality objectives are met

### *Economic systems*

When describing economic systems in this guide, we tend to use the terms 'market economy' and 'capitalism' to describe the current dominant world system.

Capitalism is an example of a market-driven economy. It is an economic system in which there is private ownership of natural resources and capital. The returns of rent, interest and profit are paid to private individuals as owners who decide on the use of their natural resources and capital. The major parts of production, distribution and exchange are carried out by private individuals or companies rather than by the government, whose intervention in the economy is minimal. Although innumerable independent producers and consumers make decisions about resource allocation, the system is coordinated by market mechanisms. Market economies are characterised by the use of market mechanisms to determine prices and are usually propelled by the profit motive. In practice, capitalism has never existed in its pure form. Normally, some public ownership and some public decision making about the use of the means of production have existed in every society.

### *Neo-liberal economic policy*

The analysis we present of the economy in this facilitator's guide is based on a feminist critique of neo-liberal economic policy. Neo-liberalism is the current variant of capitalism, which is the dominant economic system in the world today. It is a political and economic ideology that aims to minimise the role of the state in the economy. Neo-liberal thinking sees the market as the appropriate mechanism to

allocate all resources – whether natural, human or financial – with the greatest possible efficiency. In this ideology, competition and inequality between nations, business and individuals are seen as the norm, with the profit generated at the top 'trickling-down' to the bottom. The main elements of a neo-liberal programme are

- free trade, which reduces the taxes on imports (tariffs) and lowers other barriers that protect local farmers, manufacturers and service providers from foreign competition
- privatisation, which is the selling off by the state of public companies and services – often monopolies like railways, electricity and telephones – to private business
- deregulation, which means the removal of rules and regulations that get in the way of business, such as environmental regulations and the minimum wage
- cuts in government spending – particularly spending on education, health and social welfare
- free movement of capital, which entails removing barriers so that multi-national companies can invest where they like and repatriate profits as they wish

Neo-liberalism was the economic thinking introduced to Chile by Pinochet after his military coup in 1973. Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan championed it in the West in the 1980s, and over the last 20 years, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have imposed it on the countries of the South as conditions attached to loans, in the form of Structural Adjustment Programmes.

### *The Price Mechanism*

Economists tend to present the economy in terms of a relationship between 'market' and state – in other words, they 'see' only two spheres of activity: the market sphere, which provides and produces goods and services for profit, and the state sphere, which provides the social and physical infrastructure for people and businesses. Mainstream economic thinking with its strong emphasis on the market system views the 'price mechanism' as the way in which resources are allocated. The price system, operating under the laws of supply and demand, assumes that the value of activities, services and products are reflected in their price. If something does not command a price, it does not have a value. By collapsing value and price together, dominant economic theory devalues, marginalises and makes invisible unpaid work in the home, most voluntary and community activity, the majority of care work and all subsistence labour. The overwhelming majority of these activities, fundamental to the well being of all societies, are carried out by women.

Economic policy impacts all of our lives. It affects our income, our employment possibilities and conditions, our access to and control of resources, our expectations, our aspirations, and our development.

## 6. How this guide approaches the economy

Seeing women's work through an analysis of gender relations and patriarchy, economic literacy aims to reveal another sphere of activity that intersects with the market and state spheres: the care sphere, where human beings are produced, reproduced, nurtured and socialised. Because it is unpaid, vast areas of human activity, including much of the work carried out by women in the home and community, become invisible in economic calculations and unregarded in economic policy. We pose the following question: what would be different if the unpaid work in the care sphere were differently valued by economic policy makers – in other words, what would be different if policy makers could 'see' this sphere? Module 1 deals with gender analysis and the care economy in more detail.

### *Critiquing neo-liberalism in Ireland*

Module 2 examines neo-liberalism and economic growth in more detail and explores neo-liberalism in an Irish context through a critical exploration of Ireland's economic development in recent years, with its heavy dependence on encouraging foreign direct

investment (FDI) and its aim of increasing economic growth. We use this as a starting point for developing an understanding of neo-liberalism as it impacts on women in Ireland and in the South.

Economic literacy training aims to reveal the market values and gender biases in prevailing economic systems. It also aims to facilitate discussion on alternative systems and how they might be achieved. Module 2 presents some alternatives to measures of economic growth as indicators of societal well being.

### *Gender budgeting*

Module 3 explores a range of gender budget initiatives developed by women's organisations in the South, both at the level of lobbying and awareness raising, and at the level of working with government to develop new mechanisms for gender sensitive budgetary planning.

Gender budgeting refers to the range of strategies that have been initiated in many different countries to address gender equality in a very practical way by examining whether and to what extent rhetorical commitments to gender equality are reflected in government spending and taxation policy. At a practical level, gender budgeting aims to have an impact on gender equality through promoting more equitable and transparent budgetary processes and more efficient use of public resources. However, some see gender budgeting as having the potential to radically transform economic policy

making and government decision making on financial issues.

Module 4 deals with trade issues and globalisation. Though it has different meanings in different contexts, the term globalisation is often used to describe the consequences of international trade. The International Labour Office (ILO) defines globalisation as a 'process of rapid economic integration driven by liberalisation of trade investment and capital flow, as well as rapid technological change'. In the current wave of globalisation, trade policy has become an increasingly important instrument of governments' economic policy. Decisions on trade are increasingly taken at international level – by the European Union and the World Trade Organisation, for example – and are implemented at national level by changing laws and institutions if need be. Module 4 explores the policies of trade liberalisation – in other words, the policies that drive the increasing trend towards globalisation, the freeing up of trade and other economic relations between countries. Driven by the World Trade Organisation (WTO), trade liberalisation has now become the most dominant and pervasive global economic model. Module 4 argues that without a recognition of existing inequalities and inequities, women will not be able to benefit from global trade and other economic policies, and those policies will simply reinforce existing inequalities.

### *An alternative to neo-liberalism*

Module 5 looks at a human rights approach to economic policy work. Many feminists worldwide have identified the UN human rights agreements as unifying frameworks for activism and potentially as instruments of transformation. Such agreements place strong obligations on governments to fulfil human rights commitments and to take active measures to redress deep-rooted inequalities. They recognise that the fulfilment of women's human rights requires more than the removal of formal legal barriers and the guarantee of equal access to legal remedies in cases of violations of civil rights. Women's rights activists can use these documents as a framework to lobby governments for policy measures and allocation of resources aimed at addressing the pervasive systemic and structural discrimination against women at all levels of society. However, a rights discourse is of limited use without a structural analysis of systems of power.

*Traditional macroeconomic frameworks are modelled on an 'economic man', who is unaffected by historical context, gender, social class, sexual orientation, race, geographic location, or any other determining factor. In reality, this abstract person does not exist. Gender relations have a clear effect on the distribution of wealth, access to services and resources, and the opportunities needed to fully develop human potential. In turn, budgets – which are the main expression of macroeconomic policy at the national and sub-national levels – have largely inherited this failure to acknowledge the different circumstances women and men face, and their differentiated needs. While budgets have been instrumental in transmitting and reproducing gender biases, they also offer the possibility for transforming existing gender inequalities.*

**Helena Hofbauer Balmori**  
**2003**

## 7. References, resources and further reading: Methodology

Four recommended resources on facilitation skills are:

**Emer Dolphin.** 1995. *Making Connections: Women Developing Links for Change*. Dublin: Banúlacht.

**Patricia Prendiville.** 1995. *Developing Facilitation Skills*. Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency.

**Suzanne Williams.** 1994. *The Oxfam Gender Training Manual*. Oxford: Oxfam.

**Anne Hope and Sally Timmel.** 1995. *Training for Transformation*, rev. ed. Gweru: Mambo Press.

Three organisations in Ireland that carry out participant-centred training and have developed resources on aspects of the economy are

Community Action Network (CAN)

24 Gardiner Place

Dublin 1 (01) 878 8005

Contact: *Cecilia Forrester*

Partners Training for Transformation

24 Northbrook Road

Dublin 6

Lourdes Youth and Community Services (LY&CS)

Lower Seán MacDermott St

Dublin 1 (01) 836 5984

For a forthcoming publication on development education for community groups, contact *Helen MacNeill*

## References, resources and further readings: Some concepts and analyses

A good introduction to feminism:

**Beryl Madoc-Jones and Jennifer Coates**, eds. 1996 *An Introduction to Women's Studies*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Another approach to economic literacy:

**Mariama Williams.** 2000. *Women in the Market: A Manual for Popular Economic Literacy*. Brussels: WIDE.

Development education resources:

**Mary Mollaghan.** 2003. *Guide to Development Education Resources 2004-2005*. Dublin: Development Cooperation Ireland and Trócaire.

### Web sites

Some organisations with a feminist perspective on global issues and economic literacy:

Women in Development Europe (WIDE): [www.eurosur.org/wide](http://www.eurosur.org/wide)

Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era (DAWN): [www.dawn.org](http://www.dawn.org)

Women's human rights net: [www.whrnet.org](http://www.whrnet.org)

Resources on influencing policy in Ireland:

**Brian Harvey.** 2002. *Working for Change: A Guide to Influencing Policy in Ireland*. Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency.

**Caroline McCamley and Quintin Oliver**, forthcoming publication. *Policy Influencing Training Pack*. Dublin: Combat Poverty Agency.

**John Baker, Kathleen Lynch, Sara Cantillon and Judy Walsh**, forthcoming publication. *Equality from Theory to Action*. Dublin: Equality Studies Centre, University College Dublin.

## 1. Gender analysis

# Part 2

Modular approach to facilitating economic literacy

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Module 1: Gender, care and the economy

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# 1

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- 2. Making women's unpaid work visible in economic models**
  - 3. The economy as a patriarchal system**
  - 4. The care economy and neo-liberalism**
  - 5. Other dimensions of care**
  - 6. References, resources and further readings**
  - 7. Training activities**
    - 1.1 Icebreaker
    - 1.2 Sugar and Spice
    - 1.3 Gender through the generations
    - 1.4 What is the economy?
    - 1.5 Taking Action

# Gender, care and the economy

This module explores the concepts of gender and gender roles and how these intersect with the economy and influence economic models. It also discusses the notion of patriarchy in relation to the economy. The main focus in this module is on the invisibility of much of women's work in economic thinking and the impact of this invisibility on women. The module explores the idea of the 'care economy' and the implications of recognising care in economic models. As preparation to facilitate the activities in section 7, it is advisable to familiarise yourself thoroughly with sections 1 to 5, and with Part 1 of the facilitator's guide.

## 1. Gender analysis

Banúlacht's training is grounded in an analysis of gender roles and stereotypes. Neither women nor men form a homogeneous group in any society. Rather, socially determined ideas and practices of what it is to be female or male, as well as society's expectations of girls and boys, vary by culture, group, place, situation and context. These are changeable and are changing over time, influenced by global and local economic and cultural trends.

The concept of 'gender' is a key one for feminists. It was introduced by feminists in the 70s to distinguish the socially constructed ways of being 'feminine' and 'masculine' from the biological aspects of being male and female. If

*Women stand at the crossroads between production and reproduction, between economic activity and the care of human beings, between economic growth and human development. Women are workers in both spheres — the most responsible and therefore the ones with the most at stake, those who suffer most when the two spheres meet at cross-purposes, and those most sensitive to the need for better integration between the two.*

Gita Sen

**Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era (DAWN)**

ways of 'being' feminine and masculine are socially constructed rather than fixed and 'natural', then they can also be changed. More recent feminist thinking has questioned the distinction between 'sex' and 'gender' because it suggests that bodies are somehow 'outside' culture or society. This feminist view sees our bodies and minds, sex and gender, as continually interacting in a number of ways with society. Access to economic resources, for example, is a key factor in determining health and physical well being.

Our understanding of the concept of gender recognises the ways in which it intersects in complex ways with other categories, such as class, sexuality, and disability. In economic literacy training, it is important to always bear in mind that there is no 'one way' in which women experience the economy.

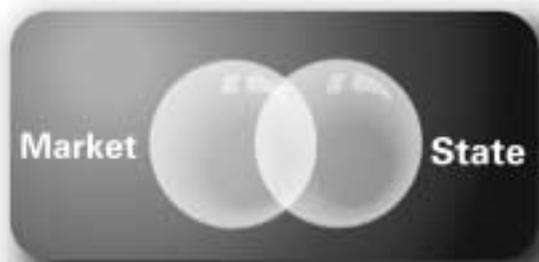
In all societies and cultures, there are deeply rooted beliefs about the appropriate attitudes, behaviours and activities for women and men. Such attitudes, the assumptions they lead to and the stereotypes that flow from them have an enormous influence on how the world is structured, how decisions are made about the allocation of resources, the value placed on different kinds of work, and the kinds of opportunities that are open to women and men in the home and the workplace.

In exploring the gender aspect of economic policies and programmes, it can be useful to ask whether they have been designed to respond to specific gender-related needs. Two types of gender needs are

- **Practical Gender Needs** are the needs women identify in their socially accepted roles in society. Practical gender needs do not challenge the gender division of labour between women and men or women's subordinate position in society.. Practical gender needs are a response to immediate perceived necessity, identified within a specific context. They are practical in nature and often are concerned with inadequacies in living conditions, such as water provision, health care and employment.
- **Strategic Gender Needs** are the needs women identify because of their subordinate position to men in their society. Strategic gender needs vary according to particular contexts. They relate to gender divisions of labour, power and control and may include such issues as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages and women's control over their bodies. Meeting strategic gender needs helps women to achieve greater gender equality. It also changes existing roles and therefore challenges women's subordinate position (Caroline Moser, 1993).

## 2. Making women's unpaid work visible in economic models

Mainstream neo-liberal economists talk about the market as a dynamic mechanism, independent of human will or action. Some economists talk about the 'invisible hand of the market' – in other words, the notion that the price mechanism alone should allocate resources and that the government should interfere as little as possible in this mechanism. In this model, the economy is represented as a set of interactions between the market and the state spheres.



The market sphere (or private sector) provides and produces goods (clothes, processed and other food, cars) and services (banking, insurance, private medical care, entertainment) for profit.

The state sphere (or public sector) provides the social and physical infrastructure for use by the other spheres. It is market-oriented to the extent that its employees are paid wages, and it is financed by government revenues (i.e., it gathers and

spends taxes). However, it is less market-oriented than the private sector because it is not profit-oriented and delivers many services free.

Feminist economists see the economy very differently from mainstream economists. A key concept in feminist economics is the concept of the 'care economy'. WIDE, for example, points out that the origins of the word economy comes from the Greek words 'oikos' (household) and 'nomos' (management). So one way of describing the economy is as a system that manages the collective household of a country (WIDE 1998). In this representation of the economy, it is seen as a set of institutions and interactions, whereby women and men engage in the processes of creating well being by managing the available resources, caring for each other and providing welfare.

From this analysis, the care economy is seen to perform a crucial and fundamental role for the development of and the growth of the other spheres because it is here that human beings are produced, reproduced, nurtured and socialised. These activities, mostly unpaid work carried out by women, are not seen as part of the economy by most economists although they are absolutely essential to society. By adding the care economy, we can represent the economy as three interconnected and interdependent spheres: market (or private), state (or public sector) and care (household and community sector).

*Seemingly neutral macro economic policies become male biased when implemented in a social context that discriminates against women.*

Diane Elson,  
**feminist economist**



Does recognition of the care economy of itself challenge neo-liberalism?

Could such recognition in fact reinforce gender stereotypes rather than challenge them?

Within the care sphere, the fundamental and basic needs of women and men are met via household and community production of food, clothing, care and shelter. This sphere is not self-sufficient because there are needs that it cannot meet without the functioning of the other two spheres. The goods and services currently provided by the market and state spheres are essential, but these spheres are incapable on their own of producing well being.

A significant amount of work in the care sphere is unpaid, although government may provide some support through child benefits, grants and subsidies. Care work is only visible in mainstream economics to the extent that it is paid work. It is only represented in national income accounts to the extent that supports and subsidies represent a cost to the state (see Module 2). Pension policies show that care work is not seen as making a contribution. State pension policies are constructed to favour those who have made paid contributions in the form of engaging in paid employment. Women who have not worked in the labour market are not considered to have made contributions, and are therefore denied equal pension entitlements.

#### *Intersections between the spheres*

In the representation of the economy outlined above, the three spheres are interdependent: The market sphere cannot create wealth for use by government, families and

communities if the government, families and communities do not create wealth in the form of people and infrastructure for use by the private sector. Areas of intersection between the spheres are crucial points. Examples of intersections between the care and market areas include private healthcare and domestic workers, such as housekeepers and nannies. Examples of intersections between the market and state spheres include state owned prisons being run by private firms, farm subsidies and regulated industries. Examples of intersections between the care and state spheres include nationalised healthcare and state owned industries, such as transportation and communication. How the spheres intersect and the consequences of that intersection are highly political. For example, the increasing migration of women from countries of the South to take up low paid domestic work in Europe has social and economic dimensions. In addition, the gender stereotype of women in the domestic sphere can be reinforced if the solution to men not carrying out their share of housework is solved by hiring another woman to carry out this work (Ehrenreich, 2003).

It is important not to assume that the activities in the care sector are always and inherently welfare producing. In the case of people with disabilities, for example, the failure of the state to provide adequate supports in the form of state-funded personal assistants and

appropriate housing results in adults being cared for by families. One aspect of this situation is that care work tends to fall disproportionately on women family members. Another impact is on the rights of adults with disabilities to make their own choices about their lives independently of their families.

### 3. The economy as a patriarchal system

The issue is not only that much of women's work is unpaid and therefore invisible. The sexual division of labour within the household has carried over into the monetary sector of the economy so that women have tended to predominate in areas of work that are extensions of women's domestic tasks and skill development. For example, women often work in the fields of nursing, teaching, and textile and clothes production, or where employers value women on the basis of their biased notions of feminine characteristics: docility, discipline, team spirit, multi-tasking, and general lack of familiarity or experience with unions. Where care work is paid, it tends to be underpaid and undervalued. Gender roles have an influence: Most of those employed in the care sphere (nursing, teaching, childcare) are women. When people employ others to carry out domestic work, the cleaners, nannies and housekeepers are overwhelmingly women. Women are disproportionately concentrated in low paid, low status and

*The term “patriarchy” as borrowed from anthropology and sociology, where it was used to refer to societies characterised by patrilineage (tracing ancestry through the father) and rule of women and younger men by older men through their positions as head of household. The term captures two themes of importance to feminists. One is the theme of domination of women by men, or a gender analysis. The other is the theme of differential access to power by men, or a class analysis. Historical and cultural variation is also acknowledged around the central theme of male domination. Millett, one of the first feminists to elaborate the concept of patriarchy, points out that “while patriarchy as an institution is a social constant so deeply entrenched as to run through all other political, social, or economic forms, whether of caste or class, feudality or bureaucracy, just as it pervades all major religions, it also exhibits great variety in history and locale”.*

Geraldine Moane, 1999

relatively invisible work (Ehrenreich, 2003). According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), women's unpaid, and therefore invisible, labour accounts for \$11 trillion, almost 50% of total world output.

The fact that unpaid work is missing in economic models means that it is often ignored in policy making. Discussions about the economy do not usually include the care economy but rather focus on the market sphere. The particular needs and situations of women are not necessarily taken into account.

Feminist economists argue that the double burden of ‘productive’ work (paid or unpaid) and ‘reproductive’ work for care providers means that many women work a ‘double shift’. Women are usually responsible for either paying for child care or relying on older children or grandmothers to take care of younger children. Feminists point out that women worldwide carry out the vast majority of reproductive and caring work, earn less than men, are disproportionately affected by poverty and social marginalisation and are underrepresented in political and other decision-making structures at all levels. Feminists use the term ‘patriarchy’ to refer to male domination of ownership and control at all levels of society (politics, economics, media, culture).

Economic policy, therefore, cannot be said to be gender neutral. Indeed, it could be termed a ‘patriarchal’ system in that economic policies are overwhelmingly made from the perspective of men and serve the interests of male-dominated corporations rather than those of people.

#### 4. The care economy and neo-liberalism

Ireland's economic policy is greatly influenced by the overarching global economic agenda known as neo-liberalism. Two aspects of neo-liberalism that impact particularly on women are

Openness to international trade and attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) are seen as the engines of economic growth. However, if a government prioritises incentives for private industry and tax breaks for investors, there will be less revenue available to spend on social services. Another consequence of open trade is the privatisation of public services, such as water and transport, which then become subject to charges and fees, this in turn having a huge impact on household budgets.

To make governments themselves more efficient, government spending should be cut. When the economy is in 'downturn' in a given country, an immediate response of the government is to cut social spending. For example, in Ireland, community employment schemes have been cut or curtailed, childcare allowances for lone parents returning to education are reduced or eliminated, spending on health and education is cut in response to lower than expected economic growth. In other words, the first cuts often hit social spending.

The commitment to cuts in social spending illustrates the gendered nature of economic thinking. Although women's unpaid work is invisible in official statements of economic policy, there is often still an unstated assumption about women's roles and burdens of responsibility in relation to care. It is assumed that women will produce, nurture and educate the workforce, and carry the burden of caring work in the home and community whether or not they have support from the state in the form of childcare provision, grants or tax-relief. When policy makers decide to cut social programs, their decisions are based on the implicit assumption, not that such services will no longer be required, but that they will be provided by 'family' and 'community' – in other words, largely by women.

Neo-liberalism deepens existing inequalities. Among the first programmes cut are the kinds of social programmes that human rights policy documents, such as the Beijing Platform for Action, identify as being absolutely necessary to redress inequality between women and men – for example, the kinds of training courses and personal development programmes that give women the skills and confidence to move into further education or employment. Social programmes – such as literacy, adult education, training programmes, and credit schemes for women – can ameliorate that impact of gender inequality within households, and cutbacks in these services disproportionately affect women.

## 5. Other dimensions of care

The use of economic terms in talking about the care or household and community sectors is useful in that it allows us to put an economic value on care work and to calculate the costs to those who do the caring in terms of time, health and lost opportunities. However, this way of talking about care can also be very reductive, and it is important to recognise another crucial issue for women. Reproductive work is experienced by different women in different ways: not only, or not all, as an unpaid burden, but also as something fulfilling and creative and as a source of joy. Caring work is also increasingly undertaken by men in different situations. In the context of economic literacy training, some relevant questions include

- Are women's needs and interests sufficiently recognised in economic policy?

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- Do women carry out a disproportionate amount of caring work as compared to men?

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- Do policy makers' assumptions about women's caring role place undue burdens on women's time as compared to men's time?

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- Do gender stereotypes about women's and men's roles lead to discrimination against women in practice?

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Another feminist critique of mainstream market economic models and economic objectives focuses on values. Because of the focus on price mechanisms as the way to determine value and a focus on economic growth that only recognises contributions that have a price tag, many economists present a picture of individuals and households driven only by self-interest. This way of looking at the economy focuses on the aims of maximising consumption and minimising prices. It takes no account of common interests or the ways in which people and communities are interdependent. It takes no account of communities, and many of the activities women engage in are left outside the picture.

## 6. References, resources and further readings

**Diane Elson.** 1995. *Male Bias in the Development Process*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

**Geraldine Moane.** 1999. *Gender and Colonialism: A Psychological Analysis of Oppression and Liberation*. London: Macmillan Press.

**Mariama Williams.** 2000. *Women in the Market: a Manual for Popular Economic Literacy*. Brussels: WIDE.

**Caroline Moser.** 1993. *Gender Planning and Development. Theory, Practice and Training*. London: Routledge.

**Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild.** 2003. *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. London: Granta.

### Web sites:

Development Alternatives for Women in a New Era (DAWN): [www.dawn.org](http://www.dawn.org)

Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO): [www.wedo.org](http://www.wedo.org)

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM): [www.unifem.org](http://www.unifem.org)

# Activities 1

## 1.1 Icebreaker

### Aim

Warm-up activity to get groups talking about the economy in a light-hearted way

### Materials/resources

Flip-chart and pens

### Procedure

In pairs, think of all the 'wise sayings and proverbs' about money. Groups take five minutes to see who can produce the longest list. These might include

*Money makes the world go round.*

*Look after the pennies, and the pounds look after themselves*

*It's a rich man's world.*

*Money can't buy you love.*

### Discussion

Briefly review the sayings and proverbs that the groups have generated. It is interesting to note the use of 'he', 'his', 'man' and 'master' in the proverbs. What does that tell us?

## 1.2 Sugar and Spice

### Aim

To introduce the idea of gender roles as learned and socialised rather than 'natural' or inevitable

### Materials/resources

Flip chart, paper, and pens

### Recommended additional preparation

Collect some brochures or catalogues from a toy shop or children clothes shop and children's story and nursery rhyme books

### Procedure

#### Stage 1: Warm-up

1. Each participant completes the following two sentences:

*I'm glad I'm a woman because...*

*If I were a man I could ....*

2. Facilitator notes the responses on two flip chart sheets (one for '*I'm glad I'm a woman...*' and the other for '*If I were a man....*').

3. Compare the two sheets. What are the differences between what's positive about being a woman (responses may include motherhood, family and friendships) and the options that are open to men that are not open to women (responses may include lack of fear, greater earning power and more choice)?

## Stage 2

4. Why are the two lists so different? Where does the difference come from?

5. Now ask the question 'what are little girls made of?' Before asking the question, you could hand around pages from a toy catalogue (a typical catalogue will show dolls and pink and purple colours for girls; trucks and guns and khaki and dark colours for boys) or a brochure from a children's clothes shop. Ask the group for their reactions.

**Elicit the following answer:** 'Sugar and spice and all things nice, that's what little girls are made of.'

Explore what the rhyme says, what its underlying message is. Ask the group what the poem says about how and where little girls are supposed to be. Note the responses on a flip chart (responses may include dainty, sweet, passive, submissive, caring, domestic, among other things).

6. Ask 'what are little boys made of?'

**Elicit the answer:** Frogs and snails and puppy dogs' tails, that's what little boys are made of.

Note the responses again. Typically, these will include freedom, free choice, natural, adventurous, wild, outdoors.

7. Ask whether there are other stories, poems and nursery rhymes that contain the same meaning. (If there are participants from different countries or cultural backgrounds in the group, it is worth giving time to an in-depth discussion here.)

## Discussion

Compare the two lists: Do these images reflect the way you were brought up? Do they reflect your society's stereotype of how girls and boys should behave? The point of this exercise is to identify two broad stereotypes and to recognise that they have implications. Some people argue very strongly that the stereotypes in the rhyme are no longer valid. Explain that the point is not that the nursery rhyme is or ever was absolutely prescriptive but that it reflects a very recognisable stereotype: Boys and girls who stray from the stereotype tend to be labelled as 'tomboys' or 'sissies'. While the insistence on girls' domestic role may have become relaxed, the stereotypes still have power (think of Barbie dolls and Action Men). Ask the group what today's version of the stereotypes are. You could use a toy

catalogue or a brochure from a children's clothes shop to make or reinforce the point. Refer to the descriptions of 'gender' and 'patriarchy' in Part 1, Section 2.

### Input

*Short input based on section 1 and 2 (pages 31 and 33).*

Present some of the ideas on 'gender' and 'gender roles'. Point out that cultural stereotypes, such as those in the nursery rhyme, are found in all societies, although these vary significantly. Even though many people do not conform to the stereotypes, they have a very powerful influence in reinforcing ideas about how women and men should be.

### Variation

1. Ask the participants in small groups to tell each other about the poems and stories in their cultures that reflect gender stereotypes. Groups report back on the similarities and differences in the stereotypes of gender roles in their cultures.

2. End a session on an upbeat note: In small groups, give participants 20 minutes to come up with a new nursery rhyme or story for girls and boys, reflecting more positive roles. (Most groups will surprise themselves with what they can produce in 20 minutes.)

## 1.3 Gender through the generations

### Aim

To explore how women's economic power and women's roles in the economy can change over generations

### Materials/resources

Flip chart, paper, pens, and, ideally, large floor space to display the groups' work

### Recommended additional preparation

You could carry out this exercise in relation to your own family before working through it with a group. You then have the option of briefly presenting the main points to the group as a way of explaining the exercise.

### Procedure

In pairs, discuss your earliest memory of money. Participants discuss for five minutes and report back.

### Discussion

What were the similarities and differences in the stories? Who had power over money? Who controlled the finances?

### Stage 1: Warm-up

#### Going back to our grandmothers

In groups of four or five, ideally with older and younger women in each group, trace your family history from your grandmother's or great-grandmother's time to your own/your daughters.

Use flip chart sheets and markers to note the discussion. Try to draw up as full a picture as possible. For example, in relation to the grandmothers, address such questions as these: Was she from an agricultural or an urban background? What kind of education did she receive? What was her economic situation? Was she economically independent? Did she own land, have a job, a business? Did she work outside the home? Did she leave home in search of work? If she was married, at what age did she marry? What changed? How many children did she have? Was she widowed?

(Groups should spend at least 45 minutes building up the picture.)

### **Discussion (small group or plenary)**

What changes took place over the generations in terms of economic independence, education and employment? What are the major differences and similarities between the different 'family trees'? What do they show about gender roles? Has women's economic situation improved or disimproved in any ways over the generations?

## 1.4 What is the economy?

### **Aim**

To introduce the idea of the care economy and a model of the economy that places women's unpaid work at the heart of our understanding of the economy

### **Resources/materials**

Flip charts and felt pens. Three flip chart sheets – each having one word written on it: Economy, Home, or Community.

### **Procedure**

1. Brainstorm on the idea of 'economy' and note all the responses on one flip chart. (Responses will vary greatly from group to group but may include banks, interest rates, import/export, central bank, GNP, men in suits, mortgages, loans, indebtedness, poverty, house prices, EU, WTO, World Bank.) It is a good idea to group the responses – for example, put the issues related to government policy together, and do the same with international policy issues and issues relating to lived experience of the economy.

2. Ask the group to think of the activities that happen in the home and the community. (Responses may include shopping, managing household budgets, elder care, having and raising children, supporting families [emotionally as well as financially], voluntary work, community development work, involvement with Church, gardening.)

3. Ask the group to look again at all the activities listed under 'Home and 'Community'. Which are never paid? Which can be either paid or unpaid? Who does this work?

### Discussion

Compare the three sheets: Why are all the activities under 'Women's Work' not listed under economy? Who is doing the work? What work do women and men do in each area?

Provide brief explanation about the 'care economy' and the idea of women's double shift. Note the invisibility of much of women's unpaid work: Why is this?

Introduce the mainstream view of the economy as two interconnecting spheres from section 3 of this module — 'Making women's unpaid work visible in economic models'. Where does women's work fit? Introduce the model of the three spheres. Give participants time to reflect on this model.

As more women work in the market economy/productive roles, what happens to the work they do in the care economy/reproductive role?

### Input

Drawing on sections 3 and 5 of this module — (pages 35 and 38) 'Making women's unpaid work visible in economic models' and 'The care economy and neo-liberalism', respectively, — focus on

the three spheres: Draw out the activities in each. Highlight the overlaps between the spheres – for example, with increasing employment, women are forced to find childcare in the market sphere. In some countries, this is provided in the state sphere. Increasingly, state-owned industries are being privatised – in other words, moved from the state to the market sphere.

### Discussion (small group or plenary)

Does the model of the three spheres represent your ideas about or experience of the economy? Why? Why not? Is anything missing?

### Variation

In small groups, participants spend 30-60 minutes coming up with their own image of an economic model that includes women's work/work in the reproductive sphere and shows the intersections and relative importance to the group of the different areas of activity. This can be done non-verbally, through drawing, sculpting or mime. Allow 10-15 minutes per group to show and explain their image.

## 1.5 Taking action

### Aim

To explore ways in which participants can use their knowledge of the economy to influence policy makers

### Resources/materials

Flip-chart, paper and pens

### Procedure

This activity is most effective if it is used as the final activity in a workshop because it presents an opportunity for the participants to draw together the themes they have explored, and review them from the perspective of lobbyists.

1. Divide the participants into small groups representing
  - unemployed lone parents
  - working women
  - community workers
2. Each group should spend 20 minutes deciding what main economic issues are of relevance to them.
3. Prepare for a meeting with two officials, one from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and one from the Department of Finance who is asking for women's input on the National Development Plan. Explain that whenever possible, participants should try to draw on real experiences that would fit with their roles
4. Meet the officials (played by the facilitator and a volunteer) and present your case.

### Variation

One group takes on the role of the officials. Decide on what the position of the government is likely to be.

### Discussion (small group or plenary)

What are the pros and cons of the 'Celtic Tiger' strategy, which in most respects is classic neo-liberalism? Consider foreign direct investment, tax cuts, business friendly unions, wage restraint, privatisation, free trade. How are women affected? What is missing from the picture of the 'Celtic Tiger'? Are there other elements that contribute to economic growth (e.g., EU funds, re-immigration, high education levels)?

### Action

How could your organisation take forward the points raised? Who are the decision makers you need to influence? What local actions could you take? What actions will your organisation take after this workshop? As a group, what strengths do you have to take action?

### Variation

Prepare copies of the sections of the Beijing Platform for Action on page 131. Give a brief background to the BPfA and give the extracts to the groups to incorporate in the role-play preparation. Discuss afterwards whether having the extracts to draw on made their case stronger.

# Part 2

Modular approach to facilitating economic literacy

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Module 2: Economic growth: A measure of well-being?

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1. **What is globalisation?**
2. **Measures of economic growth: GNI and GDP**
3. **Alternative measures**
4. **The care economy in measures of development**
5. **Contrasting views on growth and development**
6. **References, resources and further readings**
7. **Training activities**
  - 2.1 What is your real wealth?
  - 2.2 What's the right measure?
  - 2.3 A timeline to explore changes in the economy for women
  - 2.4 Kinds of growth
  - 2.5 The circuit of capital
  - 2.6 Exploring values

# Economic growth: A measure of well-being?

In the 1990s, Ireland experienced what is often described as an economic boom: a period of rapid economic growth and expansion. This is often linked to globalisation: Ireland's openness to integration with the world economy and especially to attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) is credited with having generated unprecedented levels of economic growth. This module examines economic growth: what it is, what is measured and what is ignored. It explores whether economic growth is useful as a means of measuring how well a society is doing, and if not, what other measures would be more appropriate. The point is not that economic growth is 'bad', but that it is problematic if policy makers assume that economic growth will automatically be 'good' for everyone in society. For women, a key concern is that while gender equality contributes to economic growth, economic growth is not sufficient to achieve gender equality. While growth and equity need not be contradictory goals, it is important to examine whether the kinds of policies that promote growth tend to reduce or increase gender inequalities, or leave them unaffected. The module builds on the analyses in Part 1 and Module 1, and should be read in conjunction with them.

## 1. What is globalisation?

There has been much analysis in recent times of increasing inter-relatedness and interdependence at a local and global level. This understanding that we are now 'living in a global village' has been conceptualised in the term 'globalisation'. Though the origins of globalisation are contested, it has come to be associated with the spread of capitalism and neo-liberalism, Western cultural dominance and the influence of the international media and information technology.

## 2. Measures of economic growth: GNI and GDP

Within neo-liberalism, one of the dominant indicators of economic success is economic growth, which has come to be used as the measure of economic development and a key indicator of societal well-being. In this section, we look at the dominant measure of economic growth (gross national income) and in the sections following, we explore alternative measures.

Economic growth is defined as the production of goods and services and is measured

*GDP is utterly unrelated to the well being of a community. It tells you nothing about levels of poverty, it tells you nothing about the distribution of poverty, it tells you nothing about primary health care, educational standards, environmental cleanliness. And folks have realised that this unidimensional economic fabrication does not bear any relationship to their lives.*

Marilyn Waring

**If Women Counted:  
A New Feminist Economics**

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In what ways can GNI be a useful measure?

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in terms of GNI (gross national income). The term gross national income or GNI is now generally used instead of the term gross national product (GNP). Both terms mean the same thing. In this text, we use GNI in general and use GNP in quotations if it was used in the original text.

GNI is a measure of the monetary value of goods and services produced by national companies inside and outside the country. Production is usually understood as an activity that uses inputs of labour, capital, goods and services to produce outputs of goods (material commodities that have a price tag and that can be purchased with money, used and discarded) and services. The term gross domestic product (GDP) is different in one respect: It measures the total monetary value of goods and services produced by national and international companies inside the country. It therefore includes the profits of transnational corporations that are generated in the country, even though these profits are repatriated back to the country where the company is based. In 2003, \$23 billion worth of profits generated in Ireland were repatriated, mostly to the United States (Irish Examiner).

Services – for example, banking, entertainment, tourism, call centres, insurance, hairdressing, estate agents – are regarded as production when they are produced on a commercial basis and bought and sold with money. Services – such as education, health care, childcare, and care of the elderly, the sick and people with disabilities – may be provided by the state free of charge or at subsidised rates, but because they are produced by paid labour (financed by public funds) they are nonetheless calculated in national statistics as production.

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### *Critiques of GNI and GDP*

The use of GNI (or GNP) as the measure of how well a country is doing has been much criticised. The following are some of the criticisms levelled:

- GNI is quantity rather than quality based, taking a rational or reductionist view of the world and of people that ignores many of the personal, structural and political aspects of life.
- 
- GNI only measures goods and services in the monetary economy and therefore does not show most of the work done by women in the care economy. It also omits the informal or unreported economy (e.g., subsistence farming, home-based dressmaking and much of childcare work). This means it omits a huge proportion of the work carried out by women and men in the country, such as much of the work of women farmers engaged in subsistence farming, who represent 80% of farmers in Africa.
- 
- Measures of national income show only the total wealth in a particular country, but not the distribution of that wealth. This obscures the inequalities that exist between and within countries on the basis of class, professional status, gender, 'ethnic' group or region.
- 
- GNI ascribes positive values to harmful actions and ignores or downplays constructive and creative ones. For example, cutting a forest and selling the wood generates cash and therefore increases growth, while leaving it standing does not; buying fuel to drive a car contributes to growth, but cycling or walking does not; paying childcare contributes, looking after your own, your neighbours' or families' children does not.
- 
- Measures of economic growth do not take into account the costs of economic growth, such as pollution, congestion, reduction in leisure time, natural resource depletion (non-renewable fossil fuel, raw materials, wood, water and metals).
- 
- GNI provides national aggregate statistics that justify national development targets and projects but that can marginalise local/regional views and give central governments justification to override local peoples' basic rights.
-

*To ensure we ground the correct process for development we need to give globalisation a definition that will set forth the organising principles for a people-centred sustainable development option. In this context, I propose we define globalisation as "a process that enhances people to people interaction and the sharing of the earth's rich diversity for peace, prosperity and well being."*

*This definition will ensure unity in diversity. It will begin to re-link people to their livelihood and economy and community. It will re-link people to their governance and traditional lifestyles. And it will re-link the people to their culture and spirituality.*

**Bisan Singh**  
**Asian Women Online**

While economic growth models do not emphasise the link between growth and human development, evidence suggests that investments in improving skills and meeting basic needs can contribute to sustained economic growth (Budlender, 2002). A central critique of GNI as a measure of economic growth is that it omits important aspects of human activity because they do not have monetary value and in doing so gives a quite skewed and inaccurate picture of wellbeing. Richard Douthwaite's book on economic growth, *The Growth Illusion*, gives many examples of this. For example, while researching for the book, he studied Britain over a 33-year period (1955-1988), during which economic growth had increased significantly. He found that all social indicators had deteriorated during the same period: Unemployment had increased by a factor of 10 and there was more crime, more time taken off work as a result of sickness and more chronic medical complaints, such as asthma. He concluded that the British weren't actually any happier as a result of the growth that had taken place.

He contrasted this with the example of the Indian state of Kerala. Kerala has a low rate of growth. Its resource use, which is the precondition for economic growth, is less than that for India as a whole, and its economy is not growing. However, this low rate of growth does not seem to have had detrimental effect on the well being of its people. Life expectancy, infant mortality and literacy rates are all at European levels. It is significant that Kerala has a long history of educating women, resulting in corresponding high literacy levels. It has also been suggested that much of the State's success is linked to its matrilineal social structure.

### 3. Alternative measures

#### *The human development and gender empowerment measures*

A number of alternative measures have been created to include elements of well being that are missing from GNI in order to give a truer picture of development worldwide. The human development index (HDI) has been developed by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). This combines the social indicators of life expectancy and literacy with a measure of basic income sufficient to raise the populace above the poverty level. Two refinements of the HDI are the gender-related human development index and the gender empowerment index. Though no quantitative measurement approach can take account of the complexities of different people's lives, these alternative measurements attempt to redress some of the limitations of GNI.

#### HDI, GDI and GEM in Ireland, Nicaragua and Tanzania

HDI – The human development index measures the average achievement of a country in basic human capabilities, including life expectancy, education and income. Ireland ranked position 12 on the HDI index of 2003 in a list of 175 countries, with Nicaragua at 121 and Tanzania at 160.

GDI - The gender-related development index adjusts the HDI for gender equality in life expectancy, educational attainment and income. The GDI is simply the HDI adjusted for gender inequality. Ireland dropped to 16 on the GDI in 2003, with Nicaragua rising to 98 and Tanzania to 130.

GEM – The gender empowerment measure examines whether women and men are able to actively participate in economic and political life and take part in decision making. Ireland's GEM was 16 in 2003. No GEM for Nicaragua or Tanzania was available in 2003 – only seats in parliament held by women in these countries, with 20.7% and 22.3% in Nicaragua and Tanzania, respectively. In Ireland, the 2003 figure for seats in parliament held by women was 14.2%.

Human Development Report 2003

### *The genuine progress index*

Feminist economist Marilyn Waring has suggested that instead of charting the flow of money, time-use surveys should be the starting point for analysing our society (Waring, 1988). The founders of the genuine progress index (GPI) in Nova Scotia, Canada, took this suggestion to measure time even further. They wanted an economic measure that would allow for values beyond market values. 'What we measure is literally a sign of what we value as a society. If critical social and ecological assets are not counted and valued in our measures of progress, they receive insufficient attention in the policy arena.' They came up with a system that consists of 22 social, economic and environmental components that can be used to measure 'genuine' progress. The components include

#### 1. Time use

- Economic value of civic and voluntary work
- Economic value of unpaid housework and childcare
- Costs of underemployment
- Value of leisure time

#### 2. Natural capital

- Soils and agriculture
- Forests
- Marine environment/fisheries
- Non-renewable subsoil assets
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Sustainable transportation
- Ecological footprint analysis
- Air quality
- Water quality
- Solid waste

#### 4. Socio-economic factors

- Income distribution
- Debt, external borrowing and capital movements
- Valuations of durability
- Composite livelihood security index

#### 5. Social capital

- Health care
- Educational attainment
- Costs of crime
- Human freedom index

#### 4. The care economy in measures of development

One way of reflecting the care economy in economic measures is to analyse use of time instead of flows of money. Marilyn Waring points to research done by the Status of Women Canada, which shows that two-thirds of primary health care in Canada takes place in the home. This leads her to ask why two-thirds of the primary health care budget is not directed to the home. Time-use surveys based on the Canadian census have calculated that the monetary value of unpaid work is equivalent to between 30.6% and 41.4% of the GDP. The former figure reflects what it would cost to pay someone else to do the work. The higher figure reflects what the women could earn if they were in employment. Although these figures do not challenge the undervaluing of women's work – including work that is paid – they do show the absolute dependence of Canadian society on women's unpaid work ([www.unpac.ca](http://www.unpac.ca)).

If women's unpaid work in the care economy is missing in economic models, then it will often be ignored in policy making. For example, the costs of childcare in a public or private pre-school are included in the GNI and taken into consideration in policy decisions. But the costs to women of childcare done by mothers, grandmother, aunts and older sisters are not included in the GNI and are not usually taken into account in policy decisions. Most economists assume that

women's time is available in unlimited quantities – that it has no cost to the individual, family and society. However, if the care sector is over-burdened, it will harm the private and public sectors because they will be served by less healthy and productive resources. In the global context, Barbara Ehrenreich has described the increasing migration of women from countries of the South to take up work as cleaning women, carers, housekeepers, nannies and maids, as follows: 'In the new global calculus, the female energy that flows to wealthy countries is subtracted from poor ones, often to the detriment of the families left behind.' While migrant women can ease a 'care deficit' in rich countries, their absence creates a 'care deficit' in their own countries (Ehrenreich, 2003).

#### 5. Contrasting views on growth and development

Growth as a measure of well being has been challenged and criticised by many writers and activists and from a range of different perspectives. Irish policy on economics, trade and development, however, reflects the neo-liberal view that increased growth in all countries will ultimately lead to increased prosperity and well being. It is interesting to contrast the statements from the Ireland Aid Review and the Minister of State for Trade, and the very different views that follow it from the Human Development Reports of 1996 and 2003.

Comment on growth-led development:

*Such development is the antithesis of sustainable development. This type of development de-links people from their livelihood, economy and community. It de-links people from their governance, lifestyles and culture. And it dispossesses the people from their resources, knowledge and community. The only way to bring transformation and change from a capital-centred approach to a people-centred sustainable development approach is not to reject globalisation. Globalisation is an inevitable process. What is wrong is its definition and motive. We cannot draw a crooked line and hope it will ultimately end up straight.*

Bisan Singh

**Asian Women on Line**

## 1. Irish Trade and Development Policy

As a country with a small domestic economy, Ireland relies greatly for its economic development on a liberal global trading environment. Opening up trade with other countries stimulates Irish economic growth and higher living standards as a result of the impact on productivity of more efficient specialisation, economies of scale, increased competition and the spread of technologies and investment. Customers benefit from a wider choice of goods and services and the lower prices that go with competition. Businesses benefit through the development of new markets and new sources of supply. This has been Ireland's experience in the context of EU membership and previous rounds of trade liberalisation negotiations.

Michael Ahern TD, Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise Trade and Employment, Dáil Éireann, 2003

Ireland's own recent economic development has been profoundly influenced by globalisation. In fact, a recently published index ranked Ireland as the most globalised country in the world. Between 1990 and 1999, exports increased from €18,204m to €67,978m. In the same period, Ireland attracted €40.5 billion in foreign direct investment (FDI). As a clear beneficiary of globalisation, Ireland has an experience worth sharing with developing countries. The creation of an ever more integrated world economy affords developing countries new opportunities for growth and progress. However, developing countries must be given the means to take advantage of these opportunities. There is a risk that the poorest countries will be left behind because of their insufficient administrative, infra-structural and social resources. If their development is to be sustainable, they must be able to export, to attract foreign investment and to make maximum advantage of their indigenous resources. Unless their capacity in these areas is significantly increased, they will continue to be marginalised and to lose out on the benefits of integration within the emerging world economy.

Ireland Aid Review Committee, 2002, paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5

## 2. The Human Development Report, 1996

The 1996 Human Development Report of UNDP focused on the notion of growth as a measure of well being. The report points out that 'policy makers are often mesmerised by the quantity of growth. They need to be more concerned with its quality and to take timely action to prevent growth that is lopsided and flawed.' It goes on to say that growth has failed more than a quarter of the world's people in over 100 countries, some of them rich countries. The five types of growth that give people less and not more, the UNDP report explains, are the following:

**Jobless growth:** The overall economy grows but does not expand opportunities for employment.

**Ruthless growth:** The fruits of economic growth mostly benefit the rich.

**Voiceless growth:** Economic growth is not matched by democracy or individual empowerment.

**Rootless growth:** People's cultural identity withers as economies grow.

**Futureless growth:** Economic growth consumes its very natural foundations, squandering resources needed by future generations.

UNDP Human Development Report, 1996

## 3. The Human Development Report, 2003

Several recent econometric studies have tried to show a systematic relationship between globalisation and growth and between growth and poverty reduction. The message of these studies is clear: Open your economy, liberalise and you will grow, poverty will be reduced. This research is supposed to lay to rest the attacks on globalisation and, though it shuns the words, breathes new life into long discredited trickle-down economics, which held that 'a rising tide lifts all boats'.

Trickle-down economics became discredited for an obvious reason: It was not true. Sometimes growth helps poor people, but sometimes it does not. By some measures, poverty increased in Latin America in the 1990s, even in many countries where there was growth. It was not just that well-off people gained disproportionately from growth, some of their gains may even have been at the expense of poor people.

Though there are a number of technical problems with these recent studies, the most telling problem is that they ask the wrong question. Globalisation and growth are endogenous, the result of particular policies. The debate is not about whether growth is good or bad but whether certain policies – including policies that lead to closer global integration – lead to growth and whether these policies lead to the kind of growth that improves the welfare of poor people. A look at the most success-

ful countries in growth and poverty reduction shows how misleading these studies are.

China and other East Asian countries have not followed the Washington consensus. They were slow to remove tariff barriers, and China still has not fully liberalised its capital account. Though the countries of East Asia 'globalised', they used industrial and trade policies to promote exports and global technology transfers, against the advice of international economic institutions. Perhaps most important, unlike the Washington consensus, policies promoting equity were an explicit part of their development strategies....

The policy issue is not 'to globalise or not to globalise' or 'to grow or not to grow'. In some cases, it is not even 'to liberalise or not to liberalise'. Instead, the issues are ...at what pace should trade be liberalised and what policies should accompany it? Are there pro-poor growth strategies that do more to reduce poverty as they promote growth? And are there growth strategies that increase poverty as they promote growth – strategies that should be shunned?

For instance, neither theory nor evidence supports the view that opening markets to short-term, speculative capital flows increases economic growth. But there is considerable evidence and theory that it increases economic instability, and that economic instability contributes to insecurity

and poverty. So, such forms of capital market liberalisation might in some ways increase globalisation. But they do not enhance growth and even if growth increased slightly, this form of it might increase poverty, especially in countries without adequate safety nets.

There are policies that in the long run may enhance growth and reduce poverty, such as enhancing education opportunities for disadvantaged groups, which allows countries to tap into vast reservoirs of underused talent. However, the returns to investments in pre-school education today will not manifest themselves for two decades or more – not the kind of results that show up in typical econometric studies.

Hidden beneath the surface in these econometric studies of globalisation is another subtext: Because globalisation has proven so good for growth and poverty reduction, critics of globalisation must be wrong. But these cross-sectional studies cannot address the most fundamental criticisms of globalisation as it has been practised: that it is unfair and that its benefits have disproportionately gone to rich people. After the last round of trade negotiations, the Uruguay round, a World Bank study showed that sub-Saharan Africa was actually worse off. Asymmetric liberalisation had global terms of trade effects. The globalisation studies suggest that Africa has suffered because it has not globalised. That may be partly true. But it

is also true that Africa has suffered from the way that globalisation has been managed.

Thus these econometric studies on globalisation, growth and poverty have been a misleading distraction, shifting the debate away from where it should be – on the appropriateness of particular policies for particular countries, on how globalisation can be shaped (including the rules of the game) and on international economic institutions that better promote growth and reduce poverty in the developing world. The anti-globalisation movement has often been charged with being unthinking in simply asking whether globalisation is good or bad. But the econometric studies, for all the seeming sophistication of their statistics, are equally guilty.

Human Development Report, 2003

*Special contribution by Joseph E Stiglitz*

*Nobel Laureate in Economics, 2002*

## 5. References, resources and further readings

**Marilyn Waring.** 1988. *If Women Counted: A New Feminist Economics*. San Francisco: Harper and Row. (There is also a film based on the book, directed by Terre Nash. 1995. *Who's Counting? Marilyn Waring on Sex, Lies and Global Economics*. National Film Board of Canada.)

**Hilkka Pietilä.** 1998. *How the Cake is Cut: Production and Economic Well Being*. Brussels: WIDE.

**Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild.** 2003. *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids and Sex Workers in the New Economy*. London: Granta.

**Richard Douthwaite.** 1999. *The Growth Illusion: How Economic Growth Has Enriched the Few, Impoverished the Many and Endangered the Planet*. Green Books.

**Denis O'Hearn.** 1998. *Inside the Celtic Tiger: The Irish Economy and the Asian Model*. London: Pluto Press.

**Marjorie Kelly.** 2001. *The Divine Right of Capital: Dethroning the Corporate Aristocracy*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

### Web sites

Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO): [www.wedo.org](http://www.wedo.org)

United Nations Platform for Action Committee Canada (UNPAC): [www.unpac.ca](http://www.unpac.ca)

Asian Women Online:  
[www.asianwomenonline.com](http://www.asianwomenonline.com)

FEASTA: The Foundation for the Economics of Sustainability: [www.feasta.org](http://www.feasta.org)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org). The annual Human Development Reports are available at <http://hdr.undp.org>.

# Activities 2

## 2.1 What is your real wealth?

### Aim

To facilitate discussion about what creates well being in people's lives

### Materials/resources

Flip chart, paper and pens

### Procedure

Ask the group to think about the following questions:

*What makes you happy?*

*What contributes to well being in society?*

*What do you value most about your lifestyle?*

Note the responses. (These may include family, love, nature, work, home, art, and music.)

### Discussion

This is your real wealth. How much of what we brainstormed is valuable in monetary terms? What does this tell us about price as an indicator of values? Explain

that the activities in the session will compare what people value with what economists measure.

### Input

You could give a brief input here on the 'price mechanism' (see Part 1, Concepts and analyses, section 5 (page 23), and Module 1, sections 2 (page 5, 33) and 6 (page 38)).

## 2.2 What's the right measure?

### Aim

To explore what is meant by 'economic growth' and look at what is measured and what is not in determining economic growth. To critique current indicators of growth and to explore how a people-centred economy would be measured.

### Recommended additional reading

Module 1, section 3 (page 35)

### Recommended additional preparation

Activity 1.4 'What is the economy?' should be done first (see Module 1).

## Materials/resources

Flip-chart, paper, and pens

## Procedure

1. Begin by explaining how economists talk about economic growth – in terms of GNI. In the 90s, Ireland's rapid development was considered a success story because of rapid economic growth (rising GNI). What does this mean and what is growing? Briefly explain what GNI is. Refer to the flip chart notes from Activity 1.4. Ask the group what they think is included in GNI and what is omitted.

2. Note the main points and questions and link them to the ideas noted under 'economy' from Activity 1.4. Explain what is measured in GNI. Refer to the three spheres in Activity 1.1 and ask which of the activities are measured in GNI?

3. Ask participants to consider the following in small groups:

*Do all of the activities measured contribute to well being?*

*What is left out of GNI? Why?*

*What does this say about how women's work in the economy is valued? Show third layer of cake and go through the work omitted from GNI*

What else is left out?

## Discussion

What would you look at in order to measure well being? What difference would it make if GNI was measured differently?

## Input

You could give a brief input on the critiques of GNI and GDP from section 1 (page 47). Refer also to section 3 (page 51) on the human development index and the genuine progress index.

## Variations

1. Divide participants into small groups and ask them to consider these questions: Do the alternative measures presented in this module cover everything you think should be included in a measure of societal well being. What other elements could be included?

2. Divide participants into small groups and ask them to consider these questions: If the current economic model is designed by men for men, what would an economy designed by women look like? What would be different?

## 2.3 A timeline to identify and explore economic policies

### Aim

To explore participants' experiences of the Irish economy over the last three decades and identify the main policies and trends that influenced gender roles and women's work

### Materials/resources

Markers, flip chart paper and large wall space to display work

### Recommended additional preparation

Carry out the exercise yourself in advance and check any facts you are not sure of.

### Note

this activity can generate a lot information that can be useful to refer back to in later activities. You should give groups at least an hour to work on the timelines, but the more time participants have, the richer the findings will be. If you have space in the workshop venue, it is a good idea to leave the timelines on the wall throughout a two or three day course, and add to them as the course progresses.

### Procedure

1. Divide the participants into groups of six to eight.
2. Give each group some markers and three sheets of flip chart paper, one marked *1970s*, one marked *1980s* and the final marked *1990s - present*.

3. Ask each group to list the main events for women in their country/region for each of these decades. Explain that it is not a test – it does not matter if they are not sure of when exactly something happened or when a certain policy was implemented. The idea is to map the patterns of change. (You need to give 45 minutes to an hour at least for this part of the activity.)

4. Bring the groups back together and ask each to present their timelines.

### Discussion

Discuss the following questions: What are the similarities between the timelines? What are the differences? What gave rise to or influenced these events? Who were the influences in each decade? What are the positive changes or gains and the negative changes or losses? Are women better or worse off than they were in the past? In what ways? What has the price of economic growth been?

### Variations

1. Ask groups to prepare different timelines (e.g., rural Ireland, urban, local, national and international).
2. Prepare a timeline of Irish and international events and compare it with the participants' versions. Validate their work, clarify any errors (e.g., clarify exact dates of key events). Identify the international context that parallels and influences the Irish experience.

## 2.4 Kinds of growth

### Aim

To explore the values reflected in different models of growth

### Note

To participate in this activity, you must have carried out Activity 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 first.

### Resources/materials

Photocopies of the analysis of growth from the 1996 Human Development Report in section 5 Contrasting views on growth and development.

### Procedure

Hand out copies of the different kinds of growth (jobless, ruthless, futureless, rootless, voiceless). Ask participants to read through them quietly and then begin the discussion.

### Discussion

Which of these kinds of growth did you identify in the timelines in Activity 2.3? Refer to the timeline and identify the kinds of growth, mark them in different colours to make it clearer.

### Small group discussion

How can we move from a profit-centred society to a people-centred society? What would be the values in this society? What would have to change in politics, society, the workplace, the family? Would there be losses as well as gains?

Discuss in small groups for 45 minutes and then provide feedback.

### Variations

1. Imagine that the planet Venus is an egalitarian society where women and men are valued equally and where they have found the secret of well being. Use the discussion questions above to develop a picture of the planet Venus, its values, styles of work, government and decision making.

2. Hand out the different views on economic growth and globalisation in section 5, contrasting views on growth and development. Proceed with the discussion in the same way.

## 2.5 The circuit of capital

### Aim

To illustrate how corporations can use workers, communities and governments to create profits for shareholders without necessarily creating either significant local economic growth or well being

### Resources/materials

Copies of the diagram 'Dancing to the tune of the market', with the discussion points photocopied below

### Recommended additional preparation

Familiarise yourself thoroughly with Part 1 Concepts and analyses — and read Module 4 on Globalisation and Trade.

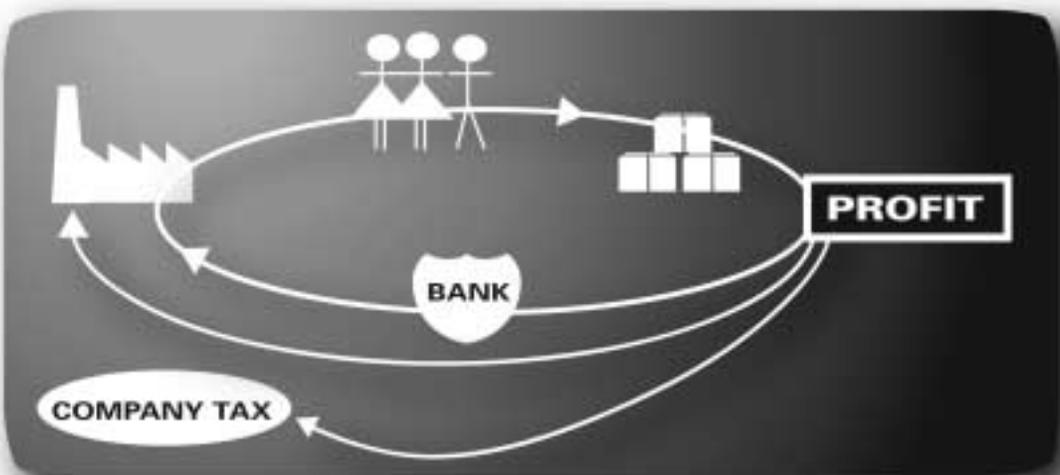
### Procedure

The methodology here is to build up a picture through a participatory dialogue with the participants. Elicit the main points from the group and add the points below as you go along. Draw the diagram below as you proceed, adding in the key elements. Use questions and answers to elicit the points and note only relevant points.

1. Begin by explaining that to understand how markets work, you first need to understand how they are supposed to work in theory. Imagine that you are going into making business. What do you need to start with? Elicit a simple model of an entrepreneur borrowing money and setting up a small business. As the participants make suggestions, fill in all the inputs (cash, labour, plant, technology, marketing) and the outputs (the product and the profits). Link these with solid lines. Point out that some of the revenue goes on wages and taxes, to pay loans, and

some is reinvested in the business. The rest is profit. (Note that in terms of women entrepreneurs, women are often disadvantaged in access to credit from banks or other financial institutions because of cultural factors, or because women may not have assets or a credit rating in their own names.) What else is needed? Elicit the kinds of infrastructure a business might need (for example, water, power supply, roads.) Who provides this?

2. Explain that many governments use a range of incentives to attract transnational corporations TNCs to invest in their countries by making some aspects of the cycle above cheaper. Ireland has been very successful in doing this: Ask what kinds of incentives have been provided for TNCs (low corporation tax, tax breaks for the first few years of operation; subsidised or low cost premises.) Add these into the diagram.



3. Ask the group to imagine that the company is floated on the stock exchange and shares are sold. Now instead of an entrepreneur, there is a CEO who has the role of maximising shareholder profits. Imagine that everything has been done in the way of marketing, sales, expanding markets and developing new products to make more profit. How can the CEO now increase profits? Explain the following points:

#### 1. Accumulation

If all goes well, the profits are reinvested into the business in the process of accumulation. 'Accumulate or die!' This is the law of accumulation and means that in order to remain competitive and stay in business, a company has to reinvest profits in order to grow bigger and produce more, or to avail of the latest technological or organisational innovation.

#### 2. Leakages

Leakages refer to how profits escape from the circuit – for example, repatriation of profits. Some corporations, such as Coca Cola and INTEL, which are owned by shareholders in the United States or the UK, will 'repatriate' or take back a high percentage of the profits generated by their operations in other countries.

#### 3. Role of the state

A firm pays taxes to the state, which in

turn provides for various conditions necessary for the economy to work — for example, providing education, roads and energy. What if the state has provided the grant for the site and tax incentives? What happens when they pull out? Note that corporation tax has been reduced to the lowest level in the EU.

#### 4. Class, 'race' and gender

Workers are not paid the full value of what they produce, thereby generating profits for the shareholders. In terms of 'race' and gender, the corporation could raise profits in a variety of ways – for example, labour segmentation (segregated work areas for women and men, with women being paid less for the same work). Ask the group about other ways the corporation could raise profits by using gender. (Examples could include lower pay for women and offering part-time, temp or contract work, which suits women's childcare responsibilities, but involves lower pay, less over-time and fewer benefits, such as holidays and maternity pay.)

#### Discussion

What examples of any of the practices discussed above do you know of (e.g., Fruit of the Loom, Packard)? Who wins and who loses in this model? Is it inevitable? What about immigrant workers, Travellers and lone parents?

## 2.6 Exploring values

### Aim

To examine and critique the Irish government's policies on growth and development

### Preparation

Photocopy section 5 — 'Contrasting views on growth and development.'

### Procedure

#### Stage 1

Divide the group into three small groups. Give each group a copy of one of the statements. Ask them to read quietly for 5 minutes. The group should then discuss the texts for a further 10 minutes and clarify what they agree with, what they disagree with and whether there is anything they don't understand.

Bring the group back into plenary and check their understanding of the texts. Briefly clarify any points of confusion. Discuss the following questions: What is the Irish government's official view of globalisation? Do you agree that Ireland's recent economic growth is due to globalisation? If not, what other factors contributed to growth? (You could prompt with, for example, EU structural funds [aid], willingness of people to enter into partnership agreements, an educated workforce, more women in the workforce, gender equality.) You could briefly give input on the main points of the Joseph Stiglitz article in section 5 at this point.

#### Stage 2

Ask the group to get back into small groups. Ask them to address the following question: Do you agree with the values that are reflected in the Irish trade and aid policy statements quoted? The Irish government has made commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action 1995 (see Module 5) to include a gender perspective in all policies and programmes. Are the statements on growth coherent with these commitments? Why? Why not? What arguments might a trade or development minister use to argue that they are coherent?

#### Stage 3

Divide the participants into two large groups. Refer back to the sections on GNI, HDI and the genuine progress index (pages 47-52). These indices attempt to build on measures of economic growth by adding in indicators of well being and progress to give a truer picture. Explain that their task is to come up with an image of all the elements that should be included in a measure of well being, showing how different elements are connected. They can do this through drawing, mime, drama, poetry or song. (This stage is a good way to end a day-long workshop.)

# Part 2

Modular approach to facilitating economic literacy

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Module 3: Gender budgeting

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1. **What is gender budgeting?**
  2. **Tools of gender budget analysis**
  3. **Who should carry out gender-responsive budgeting and why?**
  4. **References, resources and further readings**
  5. **Training activities**
    - 3.1 What is the budget?
    - 3.2 Exploring gender budget tools
    - 3.3 Gender aware policy analysis (I):  
Development cooperation and NGO spending
    - 3.4 Gender aware policy analysis (II):  
Local and national spending
    - 3.5: Role play to explore gender budgeting  
in lobbying
    - 3.6: Developing a gender aware budget statement

# Gender Budgeting

Why is progress towards gender equality so slow? Despite commitments of governments all over the world to gender equality, unequal gender relations prevail. In part, this is a failure to attach money to policy commitments – in other words, a failure to reflect a gender perspective in government budgets. There is also a need for restructuring of budgetary decision making processes in order for women's practical and strategic needs to be addressed. This module looks at some of the tools of gender budgeting that have been developed with the aim of influencing governments to implement both gender-sensitive budgets and more inclusive models of decision making about government expenditure and revenue collection.

The tools of gender budgeting can expose inequities in local and national budgets, but it is important to bear in mind that gender budgeting is only one strategy towards gender equality. Gender budgeting should not be seen as a substitute for issue-based approaches but rather as a complementary process. While structural and systemic discrimination against women exists, there is still a need for targeted funding and specific programmes aimed at women's empowerment. A gender-sensitive budget could be a great step towards gender equality, but only if it is part of a strategy to address unequal power relations.

*Governments should promote more transparent and adequate budgetary procedures at various levels to integrate the gender perspective in budgetary programming and policies, as well as the funding of programmes for equal opportunities between men and women.*

Beijing Platform for Action, 1995

*The budget reflects the values of a country – who it values, whose work it values and who it rewards...and who and what and whose work it doesn't.*

Debbie Budlender, 1996

*The annual budget statement is arguably one of the most important documents produced by any government. It reflects the government's macroeconomic strategy and political commitments in achieving economic stability, efficiency in the allocation of resources and the promotion of social justice for all.*

Scottish Women's Budget Group, 2000

## 1. What is gender budgeting?

The budget is one of the most important areas of economic policy in any country. It is, in effect, a policy statement reflecting the social and economic priorities of the government. On the face of it, the budget appears to be a gender-neutral policy instrument. It is set out in terms of financial aggregates – the totals and subtotals of expenditure and revenue – with no particular mention either of women or of men. However, this appearance of gender neutrality is more accurately described as 'gender blindness' because the national budget generally ignores the different socially determined roles, responsibilities and capabilities of women and men and usually overlooks the different impacts that policies have on men and women in a country.

### *What is macro-economic policy?*

There are three forms of macro-economic policy: exchange rate policy (relating to the national currency), monetary policy (relating to monetary supply and interest rates) and fiscal policy (relating to revenue/taxation and public expenditure).

### *What is the budget?*

A government budget is a financial statement of fiscal policy: the expected revenue and intended expenditure of the government over a given period, usually a year. Revenue is the money that government thinks it will receive in a year. It includes taxes, social security contributions, fees or charges for services. Expenditure is the money that the government intends to spend. It includes current expenditure (e.g., spending on provision of goods and services, social security and salaries for civil servants) and capital expenditure, which is expenditure on infrastructure, such as roads and public buildings.

The analysis of the budget through a gender lens has carried different names worldwide: Terms ranging from 'gender budgets' to 'gender-responsive' or 'gender-sensitive budgets' are commonly used. However, the Australian and the South African initiatives refer to 'women's budgets' to underscore the reality that, although both men and women are affected by gender relations, it is overwhelmingly women who are left in a position of subordination.

Gender-responsive budget initiatives aim to provide mechanisms by which governments in collaboration with parliamentarians, civil society groups, donor and other development agencies can integrate gender considerations into budgets. They break down, or disaggregate, the government's entire budget according to its impact on different groups of women and men, taking into account the society's underpinning gender relations, roles and opportunities to access and control resources.

### *Gender budgeting in brief*

**What is the problem?** There has been lack of progress in reducing gender inequalities, particularly due to weak political commitment and gender-blind macroeconomic frameworks. In addition, budgets themselves are problematic due to their failure to take gender into account, the lack of accurate socio-economic statistics, and the lack of transparency and participation.

**What are gender budget initiatives (GBIs) and why are they needed?** GBIs have the potential to contribute to greater gender equity, accountability, transparency, efficiency and effectiveness. In order to achieve this potential, they must move from gender-sensitive budget analysis to the formulation of gender-sensitive budgets – they must mainstream gender into the budget process. However, GBIs are just one tool designed to address one instrument that transmits inequalities.

**Who carries out gender budget initiatives?** Gender advocates both inside and outside government carry out GBIs. Coalitions, with sustained commitment and energy, can be particularly effective at driving this long-term process. Opportunities for broadening participation to ordinary citizens can help improve government accountability.

Helena Hofbauer Balmori, 2003

Looking at budgets through a gender lens can illustrate where the collection and distribution of public money is unequal and inefficient. It can also show how discrimination against women affects national development. A gender-responsive budget is not a separate budget for women but an attempt to disaggregate expenditure and revenue according to their different impacts on women and men. It is about costing gender equality policy: showing the costs to women of current budget inefficiencies and inequalities, and costing the specific policies required to redress these inequalities. Gender-sensitive budgets could potentially improve the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and transparency of government policy, as well as make significant contributions towards gender equality and the realisation of women's rights.

## 2. Tools of gender budget analysis

Government budgets present policy in terms of aggregate or total figures, without referring to gender. However, in analysing the impact of the budget, distinctions have to be made between the impacts on rich and poor households, and on different individual women, men, girls and boys within households. Gender budget analysis disaggregates or separates out different kinds of information in order to reveal the complex impacts of policy on women, men, boys and girls.

Gender budget initiatives analyse the position and condition of women and men in the paid economy. They also provide tools to evaluate unpaid work, in particular the impact of budgetary policies on the provision of care within the community and the household.

A range of tools has been developed in order to facilitate gender budgeting. These tools are questions or analyses that go to the heart of the policy issue and reveal gender biases.

### *Will government policies reduce, maintain or increase gender inequalities?*

Gender budget initiatives require analysis of the policies and programmes funded through the budget from a gender perspective. The key question is 'are the policies and their associated resources likely to reduce (or increase) gender inequalities and imbalances?' This is usually referred to as gender-aware policy appraisal.

### *Example: Land reform in South Africa*

Land reform is a priority of the South African government, with increasing expenditure by the government on compensating owners as land is redistributed and on setting up micro-finance programmes to allow new owners to develop their land. However, women's access to land and to credit is impeded by legal restrictions on women's ownership of

land. Where women do own land, it tends to be poor quality land, and women-headed households typically have no wage or salary earners. As a result, women are far less able to benefit from the reform process. The Department of Land Affairs has now started to integrate gender concerns into its monitoring and evaluation system and has begun to provide gender training for staff (Hofbauer Balmori, 2003).

### *What kind of spending would women prioritise in the budget?*

An objective of gender budget initiatives is greater involvement of citizens in the budget process. This involves asking women and men, as users of public services, for their views on how far public spending is meeting their needs as they perceive them, and what choices they would make in allocating national budget resources. This can be done through opinion polls, surveys, group discussion or interviews. The process is referred to as gender-disaggregated beneficiary assessment – in other words, assessment by the beneficiaries of public spending (i.e., members of the public) of how budgets benefit women and men.

### *Example: Cuts in public spending in the United States*

Alarm over a debt 'crisis' in the US in the mid-1990s created pressure to cut government expenditures in order to reduce the deficit. The Women's International League

for Peace and Freedom initiated a Women's Budget Project. They calculated the costs of various defence related projects and compared them to social welfare expenditure. Then they asked women which of these they would choose – fund the F-22 fighter plane programme for the current year (\$2.1 billion) or pay for the annual health care expenses of 1.3 million women (\$1.7 billion). The project outlined the ways in which savings from proposed cuts in military spending could be invested to benefit women, including employment and training programmes, campaigns against gender-based violence, and services for the elderly. A similar exercise in Ireland could gather the opinions of women heads of household on whether, if they controlled the budget, they would choose to spend government money and give tax cuts to childcare or, as the government currently does, to the horse-breeding and racing industries (Budlender et al., 2002).

### *Does public spending benefit women and men equally?*

Gender budget initiatives seek to measure the distribution of budget resources among women and men, girls and boys by estimating the unit costs of a service and calculating the extent to which it is being used by each of the groups (the 'benefit incidence'). First the annual net cost of providing a service is calculated. This total is then divided by the annual number of

'units' of the service provided (e.g., the number of hospital beds or school places). Then the pattern of use of the service is analysed by gender – for instance, how many 'units' were utilised by women and how many by men. This tool is referred to as gender-disaggregated public expenditure incidence analysis (analysis of the extent to which spending on a public service benefits women and men).

#### *Example: Food rationing in Sri Lanka*

Despite Sri Lanka's rapid economic growth in the 1980s, there was a decline in the real incomes of the poor, and the real value of food stamps issued under a food ration and subsidy programme fell. Poor householders, therefore, had less money, and the food stamps could buy less food. A gender disaggregated analysis of the food ration and subsidy programme demonstrated that among poor householders dependent on the programme, girls and women took the brunt of the resulting food deficit. Higher levels of malnutrition were found among pre-school and school age girls, and declining birth weights were recorded in babies born to low income mothers (Budlender et al., 2002).

#### *What is the impact of budgets on women's time?*

Gender budget initiatives can include analysis of the relationship between women's and men's paid and unpaid contributions to the economy. Such an

analysis would examine the extent to which the budget relies on unpaid work, such as caring for elderly in the household/community, fetching firewood and water, cooking and cleaning. This is referred to as gender-disaggregated analysis of the impact of budget on time use. Changes in budget allocations have impacts on the way time is used. Cuts in public spending can increase the time that women spend in unpaid care work for their families and communities in order to make up for lost public services. Such an analysis of the 2003 budget in Ireland could make visible the impacts of recent cuts to childcare places and to community employment schemes on women's time.

#### *Example: Time use by women in Zambia*

Between 1983 and 1985, expenditure on health in Zambia fell by 16%. People had to travel greater distances and wait for longer periods of time for treatment and medicines. Zambian women reported having to spend more time caring for sick family members, including time spent with them in hospital (Budlender et al., 2002).

#### *How do taxation policies impact on women and men?*

To answer this, we need to look at the impact of taxation or revenue policies, rather than expenditure policies, on women and men. Taxation includes direct taxes (i.e., income tax), indirect taxes (e.g., VAT) and user fees (e.g., bin charges and

water charges, which are not strictly speaking taxes but can be considered to be an alternative to tax-based financing of public services). The gender budget tool here is called gender-disaggregated tax incidence analysis. It looks, for example, at how much taxation is paid by different individuals or households; whether married couples incur greater tax liability than individuals, or vice versa; whether subsidies, exemptions or credits are allocated differently to women and men; and the impact such differences have on different women's and men's incomes and choices. This tool also looks at the gender implications of indirect taxes and user fees. User fees (also referred to as 'cost sharing' by some and 'stealth taxes' by others) have become increasingly common since the 1980s with the move away from free basic services for all (e.g., the privatisation of water in Uganda). Poorer households pay a greater proportion of their income on indirect taxes and user fees compared to wealthier households. While indirect taxes and user fees appear on their face to be gender neutral, different patterns of spending along gender lines may mean that increases in charges will have different impacts on women and men.

*Example: User fees and female education and health in some countries of Africa*

**Bangladesh:** A survey showed that four out of the five main constraints to female secondary education enrolment were related to costs.

**Uganda:** When cost-free universal primary education was introduced here, with a clear provision regarding gender equity in enrolments, girls' education was greatly improved.

**Ghana, Zimbabwe and Nigeria:** During periods when user fees were introduced, the proportion of women health service-users fell, which significantly impacted on women's health status indicators, such as maternal deaths (Hofbauer Balmori, 2003).

*How can women influence budget planning?*

The aim of gender budget analysis of government budgets is to incorporate a gender perspective into the planning of expenditure. This can be done through a tool called a gender aware medium term policy framework, which is a report assessing the impact of economic policies on women. This tool aims to change the gender-blind thinking that underlies mainstream economic models by mainstreaming a gender perspective into medium term policy frameworks (MTEFs). These are budget plans used by ministries of finance to facilitate longer term planning. They offer a key opportunity to address gender inequalities and to assess the gender-specific content of policies and ensure more effective gender-orientation of such policies in the future.

### *Example: The Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP)*

TGNP is an NGO committed to advancing the process of gender equality. The organisation developed a checklist for planners and budget officers to help them mainstream gender into the medium term policy frameworks. This checklist addresses the way in which the vision, mission, policy objectives, institutional environments, and concrete programmes are developed and put together. It aims to illustrate the way in which gender, gender relations and their effects on policy design and the economy can be incorporated. This helps to foster a deeper understanding and analysis of what is required to address the differentiated needs of women, men, girls and boys. According to TGNP, a multi-year horizon allows for a forward-looking budget and for processes that 'require commitment, willingness and attitudinal change, such as achieving gender equality' (Budlender, 2002).

### *How can women ensure government accountability for gender equality?*

One objective of gender budget initiatives is that the government produces a gender-responsive budget statement as a tool for gender budgeting. In other words, the government produces a report reviewing the budget using some of the tools above. Gender-responsive budget statements can take account of a range of factors, such as

the gender balance in government employment, the share of public service spending used mainly by women, and spending that is specially targeted at gender equality.

### *Example: Measuring the impact of the budget in Sri Lanka*

The gender budget initiative in Sri Lanka was led by the Ministry of Finance. It focused on the Ministries of Education, Health, Agriculture and Lands, Social Services and Industrial Development. Civil servants conducted in-depth research in these sectors, producing relevant information that enabled the government to assess its policies. The project examined the gender distribution in public sector employment, disaggregated recurrent expenditure by sex, and developed gender-sensitive impact indicators (Budlender et al., 2002).

## **3. Who should carry out gender-responsive budgeting and why?**

### *Who should do gender budgeting?*

Gender budgeting is potentially a powerful tool for women to challenge how seriously gender equality is taken by governments. But only potentially. While the idea of gender budgeting is gaining acceptance within some governments, and is being adopted as an approach to lobbying by some feminist NGOs, policy makers have been slow to make changes in

budgetary processes. Specific contexts in different countries determine how successful gender budget initiatives can be. Gender budget work in Uganda is grounded in a new policy of civil society involvement based on a new Constitution. Similarly political change in Brazil created a space for new gender equality initiatives.

### *Models from Brazil and Uganda*

In 1995, the municipal government of Recife, Brazil, introduced a system of popular consultation on the budget. However, in its early stages, participation in the budget process largely failed to address issues of gender inequality. In 2001 the Women's Co-ordinating Group was set up to co-ordinate the state's gender policies. The Women's Co-ordinating Group has introduced a range of initiatives to increase women's participation in the participatory budget. One initiative is the creation of mobile recreation spaces for children. These are installed where the budget meetings are held in order to facilitate participation by women with childcare responsibilities. Another initiative is 'women's meetings': meetings between government officials, members of the women's movement, and other activists, to find ways to mobilise women's participation in the budget. Activities include producing pamphlets and composing music for community radio stations. In 2002 the 'women's meeting' was formally established as the Thematic Forum on Women within the official structure of the budget-making process, and therefore in defining priorities to be implemented by the General Council of the Participatory Budget.

The Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE), a non profit organisation in Uganda, works to promote gender equality at all levels of decision-making. FOWODE was set up in 1994 by women politicians who were involved in drafting the new Ugandan Constitution. Its membership consists of gender activists (women and men). FOWODE works to ensure that gender is mainstreamed in all government policies and programmes, at both national and

*Governments (should) recognise that shared work and parental responsibilities between women and men promote women's increased participation in public life, and should take appropriate measures to achieve this, including measures to reconcile family and professional life.*

Beijing Platform for Action, 1995

Which of the gender budget tools could locally based women's groups use in their lobbying on poverty issues?

Do gender budget tools address women's practical or strategic needs?

*Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making processes and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.*

Beijing Platform for Action, 1995

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Could gender budgeting be a step towards implementation of gender equality commitments in Ireland's overseas programme?

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lower levels. For the last five years, FOWODE has been implementing a gender budget programme in collaboration with MPs from the 'special interest group caucus'. This is an alliance of MPs elected to parliament by special electoral colleges who represent women, youth, workers and people with disabilities. As part of their advocacy for the national budget to equitably address the needs of poor women and men, FOWODE produces gender aware budget analyses. FOWODE has convened two East African gender budget conferences, in 2002 and 2003 (Banúlacht 2004).

Gender budgeting involves expertise in both budgeting and gender relations. Capacity building among actors (civil society organisations and government officials) is needed to ensure effective partnership. Convincing officials that public resources should be allocated in a way that recognises the different roles that women and men play in the economy, as well as the different needs and constraints they have, is a big challenge. Ultimately, gender budget work is about politics. Gender budgeting can be a first step towards challenging broader economic policy issues, such as the emphasis on neo-liberal economics with its focus on productivity, economic growth and efficiency as measurements of economic success. Technical knowledge alone will not produce significant change or sustainable results. The effectiveness of any programme depends on the level of political will and support that it is able to secure from the highest levels.

The ultimate aim of gender budgeting is formulating national economic policy making so that it reflects gender equality objectives. Clearly, this requires a radical shift in budgetary planning and is necessarily a slow process. In addition, to be effective, gender budget work requires partnerships between women's lobbying organisations and policy makers. But this raises the possibility that the independence and critical distance organisations need

in order to challenge policy effectively could be compromised. Organisations, such as the Forum of Women in Democracy (FOWODE) in Uganda and the UK Women's Budget Group, have found that gender budget programmes are more likely to succeed if they involve a wide range of stakeholders, including politicians, researchers, government planners, civil society organisations and the media. By contrast, the example of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in the United States shows how powerful gender budget analysis can be when it is used by grassroots women's organisations to challenge government policy from the outside.

#### *Why carry out gender budgeting?*

**Economic effectiveness:** Gender-responsive budgets could lead to a more effective use of resources by ensuring that expenditure benefits those who need it most. Gender budget analysis shows the ways in which policies that are not gender sensitive impact negatively on women relative to men, and how, through perpetuating gender inequality, such policies impact on the achievement of a government's economic goals. Gender equality and women's empowerment are goals in themselves, but if women have more control over resources, there will be gains for society as a whole as well.

**Inclusion of the care economy in budgetary planning:** The fact that unpaid labour, such as childcare or elder care, is missing in economic models means that it is often ignored in policy making. Most economists assume that women's time is available in unlimited quantities and that it has no cost to the individual. Gender budget initiatives can provide tools to make unpaid work visible. They can also reveal the additional time costs to women when cuts are made in social spending in national budgets.

**Transparency and accountability:** Gender budgeting has the potential to improve transparency and accountability and to help implement policies effectively. The analysis of gender issues, the participation of women as well as men in decision-making processes at all levels, and the recognition by institutions of women's rights and needs are central to good governance. They are also strong features of gender responsive budget initiatives. Gender budgeting involves consultation by government with non-governmental organisations in order to define needs and priorities. It also provides the tools for grassroots organisations and for groups and networks within the women's movement to critique and evaluate government policy and provide relevant feedback and costed alternatives.

**Coherence between national policy and human rights commitments:** A gender-responsive budget can be an important mechanism for ensuring greater consistency between economic goals and social commitments. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) recognises women's role in the economy and lists a number of actions for governments under the heading 'Women and the Economy'. The BPfA specifically refers to 'gender-sensitive budgets' and stresses the need for an active policy of gender mainstreaming in all policies as a means of promoting equality between women and men. It lists a number of strategic objectives for governments, which should all be part of a gender-sensitive budget, as well as recommendations for governments to include a gender perspective in trade policy.

Gender budgeting could be a radical and transformative strategy towards the full realisation of women's human rights. Its potential depends on the capacity of the women's movement to create political will so that it is taken seriously as part of an overall strategy towards women's empowerment.

#### 4. Resources and further reading

**Helena Hofbauer Balmori.** 2003. *Gender and Budgets*. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

**Debbie Budlender, Diane Elson, Guy Hewitt and Tanni Mukhopadhyay.** 2002. *Gender Budgets Make Cents: Understanding Gender Responsive Budgets*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

**Debbie Budlender and Guy Hewitt.** 2003. *Engendering Budgets: A Practitioner's Guide to Understanding and Implementing Gender Responsive Budgets*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

**Debbie Budlender.** 2002. *Gender Budgets: What's in it for NGOs?* Gender and Development Vol. 10, no3, November 2002. Oxford: Oxfam.

**Banúlacht.** 2004. *Special issue on gender budgeting*. Making Connections Newsletter, Vol 7, no1. Dublin: Banúlacht.

##### Web sites:

Forum for Women in Democracy (FOWODE)  
[www.nic.ug/fowode](http://www.nic.ug/fowode)

Tanzania Gender Networking Programme  
[www.tgnp.org.za](http://www.tgnp.org.za)

Siyanda: [www.siyanda.org](http://www.siyanda.org)

Gender Responsive Budget Initiatives  
[www.gender-budgets.org](http://www.gender-budgets.org)

International Budget Project  
[www.internationalbudget.org](http://www.internationalbudget.org)

The Commonwealth Secretariat  
[www.thecommonwealth.org](http://www.thecommonwealth.org)

BRIDGE Gender Development  
[www.ids.ac.uk/bridge](http://www.ids.ac.uk/bridge)

Women's Budget Group: [www.wbg.org.uk](http://www.wbg.org.uk)

National Development Plan Gender Equality Unit  
[www.ndpgenderequality.ie](http://www.ndpgenderequality.ie)

# Activities 3

General note on activities in Module 3: While a workshop using these activities could be carried out at any time, it is particularly effective if held in the autumn, when the budget estimates are announced, but before the final budget is presented. Each activity requires additional preparation and research. The activities will be more powerful if you have obtained and read copies of different organisations' pre-budget submissions, or budget-related press releases and, ideally, made copies to give to the group.

## 3.1 What is the budget?

### **Aim**

To introduce the idea of gender sensitivity in relation to the budget.

### **Resources/materials**

Flip chart, paper and pens.

Note: This exercise will work particularly well if you have already carried out activities 1.2 and 1.5 from Module 1 and activities 2.2 and 2.6 from Module 2.

### **Brainstorm**

What is the budget? What is included in the budget? Note the points on the flip chart and then clarify with the explanations from section 2 of the module (content covering macro economic policy and the budget).

### **Small group discussion**

To what extent are women's needs, situations and priorities taken into account in the budget? The Irish government has a stated commitment to gender equality: How could the budget better reflect this commitment?

### **Input**

You could give a brief input based on sections 1 (pages 68 and 74) and 3.

## 3.2 Exploring gender budget tools

### Aim

To familiarise participants with some of the approaches to gender budgeting by matching budget tools with their impacts. (The aim is to explore the different tools, rather than to learn their names.)

### Additional preparation

Copy the descriptions of the tools from section 3 of the module onto one set of cards and examples onto another set of cards (preferably of a different colour), and the names of the tools onto a third set of cards (of a third colour). Copy enough so that each small group has a full set of tools and impact cards.

### Resources/materials

Four sets of cards as described above

### Procedure

Divide into small groups of three or four. Give each group a set of the three types of cards (shuffled). Their task is to match the description of the tool with its name and an example. Give 10-15 minutes for this exercise.

### Feedback

How did you find the exercise? Was there more than one possible match in any case?

### Input

You could give a brief input here based on section 1 (see page 68).

### Discussion (small group or plenary)

Would these tools contribute to gender a gender-sensitive budget? What other elements would have to be in place in order for gender budget initiatives to make a difference.

## 3.3 Gender aware policy analysis (I)

### Development cooperation and NGO spending

### Aim

To explore whether the gender policies of Development Cooperation Ireland and the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in the South are reflected in their annual reports.

### Resources/materials

Copies of publicity and campaigning material, annual reports and gender policies of organisations such as Development Cooperation Ireland, Trócaire, Concern, Oxfam, Christian Aid.

### Preparation

You need to contact the organisations mentioned above, or other similar organisations and get copies of their gender policies and their annual reports. (These can usually be downloaded from the organisations' web sites, and you find some web site addresses at the end of Module 4.) From these, pick sample

statements from the gender polices and copy them onto flip chart or create hand-outs with them. You will also need copies of publicity materials (leaflets, posters, campaign material) from the agencies.

### Procedure

Spread the publicity material over a table and ask participants to spend a couple of minutes browsing through it.

### Brainstorm

What kind of programmes are run or funded by the agencies/DCI? How are people from the South portrayed in the material? How are women portrayed in the material?

Gender polices of DCI, Concern and Trócaire: Take one statement from each.

- What is your reaction to the policy?
- What kind of women's programmes/women's empowerment work would the organisations have to fund to fulfil their aims in relation to gender equality?

### Discussion (small group or plenary)

Look at the annual report of Concern, DCI, Trócaire and address these questions:

- Where do think spending impacts on the aims of the gender policy?
- Where can you explicitly see links between spending and the gender policies?

- What additional information would you need to find out whether the spending was gender sensitive?

- What would a gender-sensitive annual report look like?

## 3.4 Gender aware policy analysis (II)

### Local and national spending

#### Aim

To explore whether the press releases and pre-budget submissions of Irish national and local organisations are gender sensitive

#### Resources/materials

press releases and pre-budget submissions of Irish national and local organisations (for example the Combat Poverty Agency, the Irish Farmers Association, the National Women's Council of Ireland).

#### Preparation

Contact the organisations above, or other similar organisations and get copies of their pre-budget submissions, as well as press releases from the time of the budget. Alternatively, search the web sites of the organisations and download the material.

#### Additional reading

You will need to be familiar with module 2, section 2 'Gender analysis' (page 31).

## Procedure

### Stage 1

#### Warm-up

When was the last budget? What are the main points (controversies, cuts, increases in spending) you remember from the last budget? Did they relate to women and men equally?

#### Discussion

What experience has your organisation had of lobbying in relation to the budget?

Do you think the Irish budget is gender aware? Gender blind? Gender neutral? Why?

Do you think that organisations that lobby on the budget are gender aware? Gender blind? Gender neutral?

Do certain economic roles get more attention than others?

Do both genders get equal policy attention?

Do you think the policy will reduce gender inequality in each of the economic roles?

### Stage 2

Briefly explain, or review if you have covered this before, the idea of practical and strategic gender needs. Divide the participants into small groups to look at the press releases and pre-budget

statements you have collected and explore the following questions. This should take approximately 40 minutes.

What are the implicit and explicit gender issues addressed in the press releases and pre-budget statements?

Do the policies respond to strategic and/or practical gender needs?

What are the resources allocated to these programmes?

Are the proposed policies likely to meet their stated objectives?

Are the proposed policies likely to change existing inequalities between women and men in these sectors?

Convene the groups after 20 minutes and ask for a short group presentation by one representative of each group.

### Variations

(Suitable for participants who are involved in policy work)

1. Brainstorm on who the key stakeholders are in deciding on spending at local level and national level. Ask the group about the government departments – the local and national organisations and agencies – that have an influence on how public money is spent locally and nationally.

Who makes the budget decisions per department? At what stage in the

budgetary process do they play a role? To what extent is the budgetary process transparent? Who else should be involved and why? What relationships does your organisation have with these bodies (e.g., membership of national organisations that make pre-budget submissions and representation on the County Development Board/Partnership)? Does your organisation have an impact on spending, locally or nationally? How could you have more of an impact?

## 3.5 Role play to explore gender budgeting in lobbying

### Aim

To practice presenting gender issues in a formal setting and to gain an insight into the policy makers' perspective

### Additional reading

Module 1, section 1 (page 31), 'Gender analysis'.

### Procedure

Give a brief input on practical and strategic gender needs from Module 1, section 1 'Gender Analysis'.

Divide the group of participants in two, representing the Department of Finance or the Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs and a local women's network. Use the questions listed below

as a guideline for discussion between the two groups. To make the role play more realistic, ask any women who have had meetings with government officials to be in the 'government department' group. Ask one participant of the department group to chair the meeting. Give 15 minutes preparation time.

**Women's network group:** What are the main gender priorities in the local area and what gender needs are not being met? Do these priorities reflect a strategic or practical gender need? Would addressing these priorities cost or save the government money in the medium to long term?

### Government department group

Have you been to meetings with government officials? What was the experience like? How did they respond to your arguments? In your role as government officials, what would the costs of proposals put by the women's network be to the government? What are your other priorities in the local area?

Allow 20 minutes for the discussion between the women's network and the government officials. After the role play, discuss the following:

How did it feel to be in the role you were playing? How realistic do you think the responses of the officials were? What was most effective in the women's network's presentation? What would have made the presentation more effective?

## 3.6 Developing a gender aware budget statement

### **Aim**

To explore what the elements of a gender aware budget statement could be

### **Resources/materials**

Large size index cards, or strips of coloured paper (3 inches x 12 inches) pens, blu-tac, flip chart and paper

### **Procedure**

Ask the participants individually to write down on a card one gender equity objective they would like the government/county development board to be held accountable for in the next three years. (Note: Ask participants to write in large letters because the cards will be stuck on the flip chart.) The objective should be quite specific – for example, ‘allocate resources to affordable childcare provision for lone parents’ is preferable to ‘do something about childcare’. Collect the cards and read them aloud one by one. As you read them, stick them on the flip chart. When you have read them all, ask the participants how they would group the cards.

### **Discussion**

What is your reaction to these gender objectives? What are the common elements? What are the points of difference? Refer to the difference between ‘liberal’ and ‘radical’ critiques in Part 1, section I (page 19), and to the feminist approach of challenging power structures. Would gender budget initiatives of themselves have a transformative effect on the condition and position of women? Why? Why not? If not, what else would have to be in place in order for real change to happen?

### **Small group discussion**

If these points were included in a ‘gender aware budget statement’, would it make a significant difference to women? What else would be required to really bring about change?

### **Input**

Brief input based on section 3 (page 74).

# Part 2

Modular approach to facilitating economic literacy

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**Module 4: Globalisation and trade**

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# 4

1. **What is trade?**
2. **Double standards in international trade**
3. **Women and trade**
4. **Policies of trade liberalisation and their impacts**
5. **The World Trade Organisation (WTO)**
6. **Ireland, the European Union and the WTO**
7. **Trade liberalisation, human rights and development**
8. **References, resources and further readings**
9. **Training activities**
  - 4.1 Exploring globalisation
  - 4.2 Exploring trade liberalisation
  - 4.3 Theory of comparative advantage
  - 4.4 Role play to explore the impact of trade liberalisation on women

# Globalisation and trade

Module 2 introduced the concept of globalisation in the Irish context. Globalisation has political, economic and sociocultural dimensions. These dimensions are interrelated and they operate at different levels — local, national, regional and global. Globalisation also has political, economic and sociocultural effects at each of these levels — some positive, such as transnational social movements and opportunities for dialogue and action at local and global levels, and others negative, such as increasing global inequality and lack of access to decision making at international levels. This module explores globalisation in the context of increasing world trade. It looks at specific trade policies and their impacts on women. It also examines the decision-making structures of the World Trade Organisation and the links between trade, human rights and development. As in the module on economic growth, this module does not argue that trade is ‘bad’, or that it brings no benefits. Rather, it explores whether trade policies are consistent with women’s human rights.

*Trade policies have different consequences on women and men because women and men differ in their economic and social status. Women and men respond differently to economic and trade policies because they have different sets of private resources and different levels of access to public ones. Status and control over resources are intricately woven into the sexual division of labour – the assignment of productive and reproductive roles. Thus, analysis of the economic impact of trade policy on women and men must look at the differential status of men and women and their different sets of resources.*

## 1. What is trade?

Trade is an exchange of one thing for another: buying and selling goods and services between different countries. Trade allows us to exchange goods and services we produce with others to obtain goods and services we might not otherwise be able to have. However, there is growing concern that trade on the global scale may be

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*International trade has historically impacted on people's lives, culture, relationships and decision-making processes albeit unknown to most of those whose ways of doing and thinking it most affects. From the way cultures engage with each other to the choices we make about our food, clothing, housing, natural resource management and modes of transportation, all essential to our existence as human beings, international trade has been a central element in decision making.*

Folade Mutota, CAFRA

**Footprints in Time: Trade Liberalisation Regime and Gendering in the Caribbean**

doing more harm than good and that human rights, gender equality and environmental needs are being forgotten.

Since the earliest history of humanity, few communities or countries have been totally self-sufficient. Ancient trade routes show how goods have been bought and sold between countries for thousands of years. 'Comparative advantage' refers to the analysis that over time, communities learn to specialise where they have an advantage and to trade for goods and services that are produced more easily elsewhere.

In recent decades, a new drive towards trade liberalisation has changed the picture of global trade, with dramatic consequences. This has come from an increasing tendency at the international level to reduce all barriers to trade in goods and services between countries. It has come to also include upholding the rights of transnational corporations (TNCs) to invest in other countries and strengthening the hand of patent holders, such as giant pharmaceutical companies seeking to protect their ownership rights. This trade liberalisation is grounded in the ideology of free trade, which argues that free trade brings benefits for all if the following two conditions are in place: First, each country specialises in producing the goods that it can produce most efficiently (the notion of comparative advantage), and second, there is a free and unregulated flow of goods among and between countries. In other words, governments cannot adopt measures designed to favour domestic manufactures and producers but must 'open' national economies to producers and manufacturers and, increasingly, services, from other countries. The theory of comparative advantage is explored in activity 4.3 on page 105. It is worthwhile to look over that activity at this point.

## 2. Double standards in international trade

Within a context of globalisation and the dominance of neo-liberal economics, there is increasing inequality between the countries of the industrialised North and the developing countries of the South. The impact on the lives and livelihoods of women is compounded in countries of the South by the structural inequalities between North and South, particularly in relation to aid and trade policies. Although the countries and trading blocs that dominate the World Trade Organisation (WTO) promote the ideology of 'free trade', international trade is anything but free and fair.

While trade liberalisation undoubtedly brings benefits to some, it is not inherently welfare producing. It can produce and reproduce inequality, social disparities and poverty at the same time as it expands the overall wealth in a society. Governments who 'open' their economies to free trade and a liberalised investment regime, as Ireland has done, are in a weaker position to protect local industry by limiting or putting conditions on foreign investment. They cannot prevent transnational corporations (TNCs) from freely relocating to another country or taking profits out of the country. They cannot require a component of local ownership, hiring of local labour or women, local sourcing of inputs, or contribution to local development. The

influx of foreign investment often spells disaster for local producers, especially the small-scale industries where women tend to be employed.

One dimension of North-South inequality relates to the nature of exports. Countries of the South tend to specialise in agricultural produce and food crops, which are vulnerable to natural disasters and other climatic factors and are subject to price variation. The countries of the North specialise in processed foods and manufactured goods – in other words, goods with a higher 'value-added'. In the case of coffee, for example, the coffee grower receives less than 20% of the final supermarket price. Without protectionist measures, the countries of the South will not be able to develop processing and manufacturing industries to allow them to compete with processed or manufactured imports from the North. Yet, the governments of countries in the South come under sustained pressure from other countries and from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to reduce tariffs and subsidies.

There is a further double standard in that, historically, the countries of the North have used a range of protectionist tariffs and subsidies to develop their industries and export sectors when they were developing. And powerful countries and trading blocs, such as the European Union (EU) and the United States, still insist on

maintaining protections for their own products. The aggressively protectionist EU Common Agricultural Policy and the heavily subsidised US cotton sector are good examples of this double standard. When heavily subsidised farm produce and processed food are sold in countries of the South at a lower price than local produce, local producers are often driven out of business, and agricultural sectors are decimated. Through aggressively protecting their own markets, the EU and US are depriving countries in the South of the opportunities to develop their agricultural export sector, one area where they should be able to be competitive.

### 3. Women and trade

Trade liberalisation policies may at first glance appear gender neutral. How could opening up the domestic economy to foreign banks and insurance companies or removing tariffs on imports affect women differently than men? As Diane Elson has emphasised, macro-economic policies, which appear to be gender neutral, can become male biased when implemented in a social context that discriminates against women (Elson, 1995). If policies are assumed to be gender neutral, they may reproduce or even worsen inequality. Trade liberalisation agreements are part of a complex web of macro-economic reform policies. These policies impact on gender relations and human development by

rearranging relations of power and access to resources between women and men. Even where opportunities have been opened up by trade liberalisation, women are often unable to take advantage of them due to societal norms about women's roles and lack of access to education and resources.

Women and men respond differently to economic and trade policies, and trade policies affect different women and men in different ways. In some cases, trade liberalisation has been associated with rising employment and entrepreneurial opportunities for women. In other cases, the same phenomenon may exacerbate existing gender inequalities and thus worsen women's economic and social status. These different results may occur in the same economy at the same time for different groups of women or may occur at different phases of the trade liberalisation process in the same country. Trade favours those who have a greater ability to hand over tasks to other members of the household, thereby enabling them to pursue opportunities opened up by trade policies. Trade policies are made on the assumption that women will continue to play their economically invisible role in the care economy and thus subsidise the formal economy. Women, men and children all tend to engage in productive, reproductive and community work, but in many societies, due to their multiple responsibilities, women are often unable

to take full advantage of opportunities opened up by trade, such as training or moving into new employment.

Therefore, trade policies and agreements may reproduce the status quo or, in the worst cases, introduce new forms of inequality and bias. Women may be especially vulnerable to the disruptive effects of opening up markets. This is particularly apparent in many rural areas in sub-Saharan Africa, where women trade their agricultural products and make additional income by selling crafts or processed food in the local markets. Due to trade liberalisation, women increasingly find that their livelihoods are undermined as local markets are swamped with cheap, mass-produced imports. Ironically, many of these goods are produced by women working under harsh conditions on global assembly lines in other parts of the world (WIDE, 1998).

### *A Caribbean view of globalisation*

The transitional features of global restructuring that are accompanying the current globalisation phenomenon and the attendant process of trade liberalisation are causing, and are likely to cause, significant upheavals, dislocation, changes in the notion of citizenship and governance in the lives of the Caribbean people. These changes may be as profoundly disturbing and disrupting as those that came with the prior rounds of globalisation, involving slavery, indentureship, the free movement of labour and European interstate rivalry in the Caribbean. Whether the changes wrought by the current globalisation offer opportunities for new and positive growth and direction, or whether they are entirely disruptive and lead to disenfranchisement, will depend on the willingness of Caribbean people and governments to work creatively together to develop strategies, tactics, policies and programmes to transcend the present limitations of the society, to maintain and promote human dignity, women's rights, human rights, human and social development in the context of competitiveness and enhancement of the standard of living of all Caribbean people.

Caribbean Association for Feminist Research  
and Action

#### 4. Policies of trade liberalisation and their impacts

##### *Reduction or elimination of protectionist measures*

A central plank of trade liberalisation is the reduction or elimination of protectionist tariffs and quotas. These are measures governments use to protect domestic industries and workers. One such measure is the payment of government subsidies to local producers. These subsidies help them to remain competitive by lowering their production costs. Another measure is the imposition of tariffs, which are taxes imposed on imported goods in order to make them more expensive. A third measure is the imposition of quotas or limits on the quantity of goods that can be imported, which protects local producers from losing their market share to imports.

##### **Impacts**

In the South, women's businesses, such as dressmaking and small-scale food production, are often wiped out by the influx of cheap imports, which are often produced under sweatshop conditions by women in other poor countries. In Jamaica, women dressmakers lost their markets due to cheap imports from the US (WIDE, 2000). In 1997, South Africa dismantled a program to compensate farmers for EU import tariffs in accordance with WTO obligations. The fruit canning industry was left in crisis. Women, who comprise the vast

majority of the workers in the canning factories, lost their jobs because the EU continued to protect its own markets from South African imports, and cheap subsidized EU canned fruit undercut the South Africa's market share in other countries as in S. Africa (Comhlámh and Julian Oram, 1999).

##### *Cuts in social spending*

Trade liberalisation results in governments shifting resources to the export sector at the expense of social programs that address basic needs and social development. Furthermore, cuts in social spending may be reinforced due to the loss of revenue from tariffs that are reduced or eliminated because of trade liberalisation. In the case of some countries of the South, this can be a substantial loss in revenue. Cuts in government expenditures are further promoted by overarching free trade – neo-liberal ideology that prescribes a minimalist government. These cutbacks jeopardise the ability of countries of the South to follow through on their commitments to the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). Furthermore, women's capacity to respond to opportunities created by trade, such as taking up training, education, or employment, will obviously be severely limited if their resources are being used to fill these gaps. This contributes not only to economic ineffectiveness, but it also carries a very high

human cost: Women's physical and psychological health suffers due to the overwork, malnutrition, stress and tensions of managing households with inadequate resources.

### Impacts

Guatemala was forced to abandon a highly successful public health campaign encouraging breast feeding over infant formula when Gerber, the maker of a baby-milk formula, threatened to take the case to the WTO. Gerber complained that the campaign unfairly discriminated against their product. This was despite the health programme's proven track record and UNICEF's recognition of it as a model programme (Rachel's Environment and Health Weekly, 1999).

### *Promotion of export-led growth*

Specialisation in cash crops for export is a strategy recommended by the IMF and World Bank to countries of the South. Men tend to benefit more from export promotion than women because government programs tend to target the cash crop sector. Export promotion measures – such as increased credit, tax breaks, subsidies, training and infrastructure development – are usually earmarked for crops and industries in which men dominate. Very rarely are export promotion schemes designed to develop commerce and production in the informal, or subsistence farming, sector in which so many women work. This

contributes to the low level of technological improvement or innovation in the traditional economic domain of women, especially in relation to food production. The male bias in trade policies also threatens local trade, which is often the traditional domain of women.

As well as opening borders to trade and investment, governments typically launch 'export promotion' programmes, promoting production of goods for export to earn foreign currency. Most investment occurs in the paid labour market and in large-scale industries – in sectors dominated by men.

### Impacts

Specialising in primary products is not necessarily a path to success. Production in such areas as agricultural or mineral extraction, on which many countries of the South are dependent, is a particularly risky proposition given the wild swings in prices. In Zambia, for example, copper accounted for 95 percent of exports and more than half of state revenue in the mid-1970s. The economy grew at about 6 percent a year from 1964 to 1974, but then the price of copper collapsed from about \$1.00 to \$.50 per pound. The economy experienced negative growth for the next decade. Zambia has yet to recover (Debt and Development Coalition Ireland).

Because women and men tend to work in different sectors, training, subsidies and credit do not reach the poorest women. Where women, as in many parts of Africa,

work primarily in food production, they do not necessarily benefit from more trade or investment, which only marginally affects their spheres of work.

### *The creation of export processing zones*

Many countries in the South seek to attract foreign direct investment by establishing export processing zones (EPZs). Corporations are lured by cheap labour, lax health and safety regulations and exemptions from labour law. Labour segmentation again comes into play as women are the vast majority of the workers in these zones. Expansion of trade has been associated with a rise in women's labour force participation in EPZs in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. From one perspective, this is particularly exploitative work – extremely long work hours, unhealthy and dangerous working conditions, such as exposure to toxic chemicals and a lack of proper protective equipment, and often no right to unionise. Some firms in these zones solve the problem of women's double role by insisting that they do not get pregnant.

In China, Malaysia and Singapore, for example, women in some companies have to undergo regular pregnancy tests. On the other hand, firms in EPZs sometimes pay better than local firms do. For example, in Bangladesh, wages for women in the export garment industry are three times the level of male agricultural

wages. Some young women are earning far more than their fathers or brothers. However, whether this opens up new life options for women depends on whether they control the money they earn. Cultural factors may mean that women do not control their earnings. In which case, working in an EPZ will not empower women (Williams, 2003).

### **Impacts**

Women are often seen as docile and willing to work cheaply and have been heavily recruited to work in EPZs. They are often subjected to dangerous working conditions and physical and sexual harassment. They can be fired when pregnant, paid less than men, and have no right to unionise. Even these jobs are not secure. There is evidence from Mexico and Jamaica, for example, that, as these sectors move into high tech production, the employment balance is shifting from women to men (WIDE, GEM and CICSA, 2001).

### *Privatisation: The inclusion of services in trade agreements*

A service is a product aimed at satisfying a human need that does not constitute a tangible commodity. Services include those needs that are usually, though not exclusively, associated with the private sector/market sphere (such as insurance, finance, tourism), and others that are associated, though not exclusively, with the public sector/state sphere (such as

education, health, transport, water and energy). Trade liberalisation in services means that the service must be open to competition from other providers. Therefore, for public services to be liberalised, they must first be privatised.

### Impacts

Liberalisation, or privatisation, of services has implications for health care, job security and conditions of work for large numbers of people. Unchecked liberalisation of essential services, such as water, health care and education, could lead to those who cannot afford to pay being denied the services. In Bolivia, privatisation of water dramatically increased costs and reduced poor people's access to it. In South Africa, the imposition of user fees for water supply has led to the poor not having access to safe drinking water. This has been implicated in outbreaks of cholera (Mariama Williams, 2003).

### *Trade-related intellectual property rights*

Though not a policy, the extension of the concept of 'intellectual property rights' to life forms is also associated with trade liberalisation. Trade-related intellectual property rights (TRIPs) has two important aspects. First, TRIPs allows TNCs to take out patents on life forms, such as new strains of seeds. This means that the TNC can control the use of these seeds and other life-forms. Second, TRIPs extends the life of patents so that TNCs have control over products and life forms they have patented for longer than before. Farmers often have no choice but to buy patented seeds due to the stranglehold of the giant seed companies. If they use patented seeds, farmers cannot save part of their crop for next year's seeds but instead must buy more from the patent holder.

Under the WTO TRIPs agreement, corporate interest in putting patents on plant genetic resources and medical

*Reduced access to and the likely un-affordability of privatised and liberalised services such as water and health care will greatly affect women because of their role in social reproduction. It is now recognised that women are likely to be over-represented among those suffering from untreated injuries/diseases, malnutrition/hunger and illiteracy/innumeracy. Service trade reforms and trade liberalisation policies that do not take these factors into account are unlikely to yield much benefit to women in their multiple roles as caregivers, household workers, entrepreneurs, farmers and workers in the formal and informal sectors.*

Mariama Williams, 2003

treatments has been pushed to the fore, while the rights of poor communities in developing countries to food security and affordable health care have been largely ignored. The TRIPs agreement established a global standard for patents, giving uniform 20-year protection on both processes and products patented and raising the costs of technology transfer for developing countries. This has deprived many countries of the South of the opportunity to produce cheaper generic medicines essential to their public health strategies, including inhibiting their responses to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

At the WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha in 2001, a Declaration on Public Health was agreed on, declaring that public health should take precedence over patent rules and that the rules preventing developing countries from importing life-saving drugs at affordable prices should be changed. The deadline for agreement on implementation of the declaration was set for December 2002. Due to US intransigence, under pressure from its pharmaceutical industry, and EU acquiescence, the deadline was missed. This is yet another indication of bad faith on the part of countries of the North in delivering on the promise of a development round (Trade Matters, 2003).

### Impacts

TRIPs affects women on a plethora of issues, such as reproductive health, agriculture, food security, as well as traditional knowledge in foods and medicines, because women are the primary users and maintainers of biodiversity. In the poorest households of the South, traditional diet consists of a 'finely balanced mix of cultivated crops and plants and fruits found in the wild. Vandana Shiva demonstrates how Monsanto's creation of herbicide-resistant plants, thanks to genetic modification technologies, has resulted in the killing of weeds that are an essential part of the food supply in south Asia and Africa. In India, for example, women use up to 150 species of plants as medicine, food or fodder, that would ordinarily be described by the biotechnology industry as 'weeds'. She also demonstrates how thousands of rural women, whose livelihoods are dependent on the seeds and grasses used in basket and mat weaving are seeing their incomes decimated by the spread of herbicide-resistant varieties (Comhlámh, 2003). Women in subsistence agriculture have traditionally played a key role in preserving native seed varieties. TRIPs, therefore, favour the TNCs' rights to make profits over women's access to critical resources.

## 5. The World Trade Organisation (WTO)

The principal decision making body on international trade is the World Trade Organisation, based in Geneva, Switzerland, which was established in 1995. It replaced the GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade). The WTO is a multi-lateral trading organisation, which means that it is one body that negotiates trade agreements to which all its member countries are subject.

### The main tasks of the WTO are

- administering WTO agreements
- providing a forum for trade negotiations
- handling trade disputes
- monitoring national trade policies
- technical assistance and training for countries of the South
- cooperation with other international organisations

There are currently 146 members. In theory, all member countries of the WTO have an equal voice, and decisions are made through consensus on a one-country-one-vote system. In reality, decision making is managed by the 'quad' – the United States, Japan, European Union and Canada. The US has over 250 negotiators in Geneva (and the capacity to fly in experts as required). Bangladesh has one. Twenty-nine countries, many of them those countries of the South that are

classified as 'least developed countries' (LDCs), have none. This domination results in a double standard – for example, the WTO allows EU members to continue to protect and subsidise their agriculture under the Common Agricultural Policy, whereas many of the poorest countries have been forced to abandon similar policies. The estimated cost to countries of the South of protective measures by powerful countries in food and textiles trade is about \$700 billion – 14 times what they receive in aid. The WTO is seen by the EU as an engine of sustainable development. There is no mention of gender or women in its charter, even though it was signed in the same year and by almost all the same governments as the Beijing Platform for Action.

The WTO decision-making process is opaque and secretive. The main decision-making fora are the ministerial meetings (these are the meetings that took place in Seattle, USA, in 1999; in Doha, Qatar, in 2001; and in Cancun, Mexico, in 2003). Recent meetings have witnessed a tendency to informal, undocumented and exclusive meetings where the more powerful countries broker deals and from which the less powerful are excluded. Scheduling of meetings makes it impossible for small delegations to follow all the critical issues. There is also a growing pattern of 'mini-ministerials' in the build-up to the ministerial meetings. These meetings exclude many countries and make a few countries an unelected 'steering group' for the ministerial meeting.

## 6. Ireland, the European Union and the WTO

Ireland does not have an independent voice in the WTO but participates as a member of the EU. The EU has championed the WTO because it believes the best way to achieve trade liberalisation, and therefore access to new markets for European business, is through multi-lateral agreements between all the major trading powers and the "emerging markets" in the South. The United States, by contrast, has been equally happy to open markets by concluding bilateral or regional free-trade agreements with interested states. The North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) is the most famous example. Another example is the Cotonou agreement, which concerns Europe's relations with its member states' former colonies in the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) regions.

Ireland and the EU clearly believe that the multi-lateral trading system and the WTO are necessary for pursuing development. However, a growing number of countries question whether the current directions of the WTO can foster development. Many NGOs would take that position further by saying that the current directions and operations of the WTO are anti-development. While radical critics of the status quo would call for the abolition of the WTO, many development organisations have argued that countries of the South are likely to get a better deal at the WTO

where they can bargain collectively with countries of the North rather than in a series of bilateral deals. According to this view, without a set of global rules governing trade, countries of the South would be even more at the mercy of powerful companies and countries. In this sense, some have looked to the EU to be a progressive force within the WTO, and it was the EU that pressed to have the current round of negotiations labelled the Doha Development Round, named after Doha, in Qatar, where the negotiations began in 2001.

### A trade minister's view of the WTO, Ireland and the EU

Ireland participates in these negotiations as a member of the European Union delegation. The European Commission negotiates on behalf of the EU on the basis of positions agreed in advance between the member states. As negotiations proceed, there is virtually continuous coordination between the Commission and the member states across the whole range of issues under discussion. In this way, member states are made aware of developments and also have the opportunity to advise the Commission of their attitude on the various issues.

Ireland's priority in these negotiations has been, and is, to see the process of trade liberalisation continue in a fair and

balanced way and to support the strengthening of the World Trade Organisation in its provision of a stable and consistent framework for the regulation of world trade. Central to our approach, and that of the European Union, is a commitment to respond positively in the negotiations to the concerns and ambitions of the developing world. This is an essential part of the Doha agenda....

For these reasons, Ireland supports the maintenance of a strong rules-based multilateral trading system. It is very much in our interest that the World Trade Organisation, which reflects the interests of both developed and countries of the South, remains the primary arbiter and rule making body in international trade issues. Without the WTO regulating the system with enforceable rules, the interests of large countries would dominate those of smaller countries. Countries seeking better overseas market access would pursue regional or bilateral trading arrangements and the whole system would become increasingly complex and lacking in predictability.

As has been pointed out in a number of recent reports, the operation of the WTO, and the GATT before it, has had a subtle but profound effect on Irish industrial development during the past three decades. It has regulated and progressively liberalised trade relations between Ireland and nearly all countries outside the EU, including the United States and most of

Latin America and Asia. This has been a key factor in Ireland's economic transformation. Since the 1970s, total Irish trade has increased from over €1.5 billion equal to more than 80% of GDP, to over €200 billion, more than 180% of GDP, at the beginning of this century.

Michael Ahern TD, Minister of State at the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment  
Dáil Éireann, 2003

The fourth ministerial in Doha proclaimed that it placed development at the centre of the WTO agenda. It seemed possible that the Doha Declaration meant that the EU and others would agree to dismantle their discriminatory agricultural supports, and in return countries of the South would further open their markets to goods, and particularly services, from rich countries. However, the EU is also a staunch defender of its system of agricultural support, which denies market access to products from the countries of the South if they pose a competitive threat to EU farmers. At the fifth ministerial meeting held in Cancun, Mexico, in 2003, the talks failed because rich and poor countries could not reach agreement on two key issues. The first and most contentious of these was agriculture. Rich countries were accused of hypocrisy for urging poor countries to open their markets but not being prepared to open their own – or to reduce the huge subsidies to their farmers. In the end, the rich countries would not agree to the abolition of

all export subsidies, which make their agricultural products cheaper on world markets. There was also a great deal of opposition to EU proposals for rules to govern investment by multinational companies in the South. Many countries felt that they could not agree to this without losing control of their industries and argued that the WTO was not the appropriate forum for such discussions. The irony is that the WTO's greatest champion became the biggest impediment to a deal.

## 7. Trade liberalisation, human rights and development

In an increasingly globalised economy, the advancement of women is inextricably tied to the policies and structures of trade and investment, both internationally and domestically. Yet trade policies are made on the basis of crucial assumptions about gender. Internationally, these policies and structures are created, enforced and maintained by the WTO. There is no recognition within the WTO of the differential impact of trade liberalisation on women and men and to the many forms of discrimination against women. Due, in part, to the invisibility of women and women's work, trade liberalisation has been detrimental for millions of women and their families, particularly in the South. For example, trade liberalisation policy requires the elimination of 'non-tariff barriers' to trade. This means that under trade

rules, national policies aimed at promoting human rights, social inclusion, equality and environmental sustainability can be challenged as a barrier to 'free trade.' For instance, it is very likely that the kinds of positive actions envisaged by the Beijing Platform for Action, such as favourable access to credit for women, could be challenged as a 'non-tariff barrier' to trade under WTO rules. It has also been detrimental for women for the same reason that it has been detrimental overall for people in the South: The international policies and structures of trade are dominated by the 'quad' countries and often reflect the interests of powerful TNCs.

At European and WTO levels, the neo-liberal aim of trade liberalisation dominates mainstream economic ideology, policies and institutions. Trade liberalisation is a global process affecting every country in the world. At the same time, many governments have committed themselves to a range of international and regional human rights conventions that provide an overarching global framework for human rights. These governments have made numerous commitments to and expended significant resources on the elimination of gender-based discrimination and the promotion of gender equality. There is a real concern among women's groups that some of the advances made may be eroded if a gender perspective is not included in these agreements. While trade liberalisation and

globalisation may present some new opportunities for some women and men, they may also cause the loss of employment and livelihood for others. There is a need for trade policy to reflect commitments to human rights core labour standards and gender equality, which are recognised as essential to development, democracy and peace.

### *Changing the WTO?*

Vague or rhetorical commitments made by politicians are not sufficient. Powerful interest groups do not have to directly oppose the general commitments given by political leaders because they can exert influence in the negotiation process through their national delegations. The technical forum of negotiation, thus, is used to slow the process and reduce its scale, range and impact. In order for human rights and gender equity considerations to be addressed explicitly, trade negotiators must be made accountable to political processes. Progress on the technical details of the negotiations has to be clearly subordinated to political decision and less influenced by interest group lobbies. Political agreement should be more detailed and involve quantified targets and impacts, including gender indicators. In general terms, it is up to the politicians to provide clear and more specific direction to the negotiators so that technical issues and negotiations have less influence on the final outcomes. The kinds of recommendations and strategies in the Beijing Platform for Action could provide a framework for developing targeted actions on the economy and on human rights (see Module 5, section 8 and also the specific recommendations on trade listed on the inside back cover of this guide).

While the talks at the WTO in Cancun in 2003 failed to result in an agreement, from another perspective, the talks were a success: The formation of new and effective alliances of countries of the South kept the development

*The social dimension of trade policy and trade liberalisation is now a common topic in many official trade fora. However, this discussion is taking place with little or no attention to the different needs, constraints and interests of women. At the same time, it is increasingly recognised that simply paying attention to general targets and commitments of poverty eradication or sustainable development will not solve the problems of gender discrimination and the lack of economic and social advancement that still plague the lives of millions of women in countries of the South.*

Mariama Williams, 2003

.....  
*Can trade policy be made coherent with human rights agreements like the Beijing Platform for Action?*  
 .....

focus in the negotiations. The countries of the South went to the WTO with a clear agenda and political alliances and were successful in ensuring that their agenda was to the fore in the negotiations. If this trend continues, trade talks in the future

might actually lead to a more transparent and democratic WTO and a trading system that enhances development, human rights, gender equity and environmental sustainability.

## 8. References, resources and further reading

highly recommended publication on gender, development and trade is

**Mariama Williams.** 2003. *Gender Mainstreaming in the Multilateral Trading System: A Handbook for Policy Makers and Other Stakeholders*. London: Commonwealth Secretariat.

Other recommended publications:

**Marina Fe B. Durano.** 2002. *Globalisation of Production through FDI and Trade*. Information Sheet. Brussels: WIDE.

**WIDE, GEM and CICSA.** 2001. *International Trade and Gender Inequality*. Brussels: WIDE.

**Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson.** 1981. *Nimble Fingers Make Cheap Workers: An Analysis of Women's Employment in Third World Export Manufacturing*. *Feminist Review*, 7.

**Oxfam.** 1998. *The Impact of Trade Liberalisation on Women Workers: case studies from Mexico, Asia, South Africa and the US*. [www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk).

**Comhlámh and Julian Oram.** 1999. *Voices from the Field*. Cork: Comhlámh.

**Folade Mutota.** 2001. *Footprints in Time: Trade Liberalisation Regime and Gendering in the Caribbean*. CAFRA

**Trade Matters.** 2003. *An Agenda for Trade Justice: Cancun Briefing*. Dublin: Trade Matters.

**Rachel's Environment and Health Weekly.** 1999. *Corporate Rights versus Human Need*. No 677. November 1999. [www.rachel.org](http://www.rachel.org)

**Colm Regan,** ed. 2002. 80-20 *Development in an Unequal World*. Bray: 80-20 Educating and Acting for a Better World.

### Web sites

Women in Development Europe (WIDE)  
[www.eurosur.org/wide](http://www.eurosur.org/wide)

International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN)  
[www.igtn.org](http://www.igtn.org)

Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO): [www.wedo.org](http://www.wedo.org)

Commonwealth Secretariat  
[www.thecommonwealth.org/gender](http://www.thecommonwealth.org/gender)

Centre of Concern, Global Women's Project  
[www.coc.org/focus](http://www.coc.org/focus)

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM): [www.unifem.org](http://www.unifem.org)

For campaigns and briefing materials from an Irish perspective

Comhlámh: [www.comhlamh.org](http://www.comhlamh.org)

Trócaire: [www.trocaire.ie](http://www.trocaire.ie)

Christian Aid: [www.christian-aid.ie](http://www.christian-aid.ie)

Oxfam Ireland: [www.oxfamireland.org](http://www.oxfamireland.org)

Oxfam UK: [www.oxfam.org.uk](http://www.oxfam.org.uk)

Congress Solidarity Committee:  
[www.ictuglobalsolidarity.org](http://www.ictuglobalsolidarity.org)

# Activities 4

## 4.1 Exploring globalisation

### Aim:

To explore how people are interdependent in a globalised world

### Resources/materials

Markers, flip chart paper and large wall space

### Recommended additional reading

Module 1, sections 4 (page 37) and Module 2, section 5 (page 53)

### Recommended additional preparation

Contact a development NGO (such as Fair Trade Mark, ICTU, Christian Aid, or Trócaire) for campaign literature on fair trade. This will give you up-to-date examples of the issues.

### Procedure

1. Stick three or four sheets of flip chart to a wall. Write the word *globalisation* in the centre.

2. Elicit/explain the meaning of globalisation.

3. Ask the group what the impacts of free trade are on their lives. Name and map the impact linking similar themes and highlighting contradictions. As you note the responses, try to group related themes – for example, group together the points on greater variety in shops, consumer choice, produce available out of season). Or group points about working conditions in countries of the South, powdered milk producers' marketing in the South, and sweat shops together. Draw arrows to link the issues. Similarly, group points relating to the following issues together:

- the rights of farmers and workers in producer countries
- international relations
- impact on consumer choice
- impact on producers and retailers in Ireland
- marketing, advertising and consumerism

### Discussion (small group or plenary)

Link the web exercise to the points raised when looking at the care economy. Identify the areas where women are most affected. Consider the impact of greater

choice of products in Ireland on women in producer countries, such as the Philippines and Mexico. Do we really have greater choice than before? How much freedom does free trade really bring the consumer, the worker, the mother, the household manager? What factors influence whether globalisation brings benefits (think about class, wealth, culture, language, power)?

### Input

Brief input based on sections 1,2,6 and 7.

### Variation

Focus on one product – for example, coffee. Draw out the journey of coffee from the producer country to the consumer country. Highlight the vulnerability of raw materials to price change on world markets due to market manipulation, gluts and shortages. Focus on the nature of coffee as a luxury item, not a food crop, and discuss the impact of mono-culture on land quality and the environment.

## 4.2 Exploring trade liberalisation

### Aim

To familiarise participants with the main decision-making bodies in relation to trade and with the main policies of trade liberalisation

### Procedure

#### Stage 1

1. Begin by asking if anyone has heard of the WTO and note on a flip chart participants' ideas about the organisation (prompt by mentioning the ministerial meetings held, for example, in Seattle, Doha and Cancun).
2. Give a brief input on the WTO based on material in sections 5 The World Trade Organisation (WTO) and 6 Ireland, the European Union and the World Trade Organisation of the module.
3. Leave plenty of time for questions and answers.

### Discussion (small group or plenary)

Were you aware of the WTO? What is your reaction? Why has it got so much power? How can women influence its processes?

#### Stage 2

1. Explore some of the policies of trade liberalisation that dominate current trade policies. Acknowledge that the language in this area is complicated.
2. Present the policies outlined in section 6 of the module. Explain each in turn, placing emphasis on the impacts, and allow participants plenty of time to ask questions. Ask whether these policies have been used in Ireland.

3. Allow plenty of time for questions and answers.

### Discussion (small group and plenary)

What kind of freedom and what kind of equality does the WTO protect? Whose values are reflected in its decisions? Is this model of globalisation inevitable? What kinds of values do women's organisations want to see promoted?

## 4.3 Theory of comparative advantage

### Aim

To understand the theory behind trade and to identify some of the contradictions and double standards

### Materials/resources

One-pound bag of beans and of rice and six glasses or transparent plastic cups.

### Note

Activity 4.2 should be covered first.

### Procedure

Divide the group into two. One group is Riceland and one group is Beanland. Introduce the following scenario.

The people of the neighbouring countries, Riceland and Beanland, eat rice and beans as part of their staple

diet. Both countries grow both crops. However, Riceland is better suited to growing rice than beans. One worker can grow twice as much rice as beans.

Pour out 1 cup of rice and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of beans and give them to the Riceland group.

Beanland is better suited to growing beans than rice. One worker can grow twice as many beans as rice.

Pour 1 cup of beans and  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of rice and give them to the Beanland group.

Ask the groups to figure out how each country can end up with more of each product. Allow 5 minutes to work it out and then explain the following:

- Before trade, two workers in Riceland produce 1 kilo of rice and  $\frac{1}{2}$  kilo of beans. Two workers in Beanland produce 1 kilo of beans and  $\frac{1}{2}$  kilo of rice.
- If they specialise, Riceland only produces rice and two workers can produce 2 kilos of rice. Beanland only produces beans, and two workers can produce 2 kilos of beans.
- If they then trade, each will have one kilo of rice and one kilo of beans. So each has more than before specialisation (WIDE, 1998).

**Discussion (small group or plenary)**

What flaws can you see in this theory? What problems come with dependence on one crop? What if one country specialises in manufactured goods and the other in unprocessed food? What if one producer, say the US, specialises in almost all the products?

**Input**

Give a brief input based on sections 1. What is trade? and 2. Double standards in international trade.

## 4.4 Role play to explore the impact of trade liberalisation on women

**Aim**

To explore the impact of the policies of trade liberalisation on the lives of women in the South

**Resources/materials**

Copies of the roles listed below – one role for each person in the group if possible

**Note**

Activities 4.1 to 4.4 must be completed before this activity.

**Procedure**

Hand out the roles below. In larger groups, two people might have to share a

role. In smaller groups the facilitator can either ask pairs to take three or four roles between them, or select a smaller number of roles. Groups break into pairs or groups of three to discuss the impacts of the policies discussed in Activity 4.2 on their lives in the role they have been given and the choices open to them. Give plenty of time for this discussion and circulate the answers to questions and clarify any issues that arise. Or you can use variation 3 below.

**Variations**

1. Groups continue to work in the original pairs or threes, or two or three new groups are formed with one woman from each of the previous clusters in each larger group.
2. Women's Hour on local TV has invited a panel of women to talk about the benefits of globalisation policies for women. In pairs, discuss the roles and the impact on each household for 15 minutes and come up with a list of concerns about the policies to express on Women's Hour. Introduce yourself and explain your view of the new policies. Each woman has two or three minutes for her presentation.
3. Each participant takes 30 minutes to write a biography of her character before the interactive part of the role play (this allows participants to flesh out the family history and imagine the life of the woman in question at a deeper level).

4. A delegation of Irish women is coming to visit the women's centre to meet some local women from La Esperanza. Prepare a presentation asking for their solidarity. What could the Irish women do to support you?

5. An international NGO is willing to fund a local women's NGO, 'Women United' (see Teresa's role description) with a grant of €25,000 per year. What is the best way this money could be spent?

6. An Irish trade delegation visits the women's centre after visiting a model maquila and speaking to local business people. Base a role play on a meeting of the characters with the members of the delegation.

7. Use an 'Oprah-style' format. Start with two pro-free trade characters and bring on two of the other characters to challenge their views. The other characters are in the audience. Encourage audience participation.

8. After the discussion and exploration of trade issues (and perhaps on a different day) bring the participants back into their roles, but this time they are updating Oprah on their lives after five years of fair trade and global solidarity.

#### **Discussion (small group or plenary)**

Discuss the issues raised by the role play and the implications of the policies explored. How much freedom does free

trade give these women? Who are the winners and who are the losers in neo-liberalism? What actions can Irish women take in solidarity with women in countries of the South? How can we use our political power and our consumer power most effectively?

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#### **La Esperanza roles**

**Gilda** has two young sons and a daughter. One of the boys has diabetes. Her husband Manolo is about to lose his job as a middle ranking civil servant in the Ministry of Transport. Her husband's job barely allows her to stay at home and mind the children as it is. He will get a redundancy payment. The boy with diabetes, who gets some treatment paid for through her husband's department, needs constant monitoring and care. Manolo was proud to be a public servant and was respected in his community. Now he says he can't bear the shame of unemployment and must emigrate. Gilda does not want to leave her hometown where her mother and sisters live. Manolo is starting to spend all day in bed and is showing signs of depression.

**You are Gilda. What impacts will the privatisation of the power plant have on you and your family? What are your options? What will you do?**

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**Nidia** is 19. She lives with her grandparents, sharing a small room with her mother and younger brother. Nidia works at the maquila, making t-shirts. She leaves home at 4.30 a.m. to walk to the factory and work the 6.30 – 6.30 shift. Nidia recently read a pamphlet on workers' rights and attended a one-day workshop about Labour Rights. She feels that the working conditions in the maquila are unfair. Most of the family income comes from two sisters, Felipa and Soledad, who work in the US. Felipa works in a factory. She says life is good in the US, but she misses home. Soledad works in a night-club. She started out as a cleaner, but she has now changed job. She doesn't say much about it when she phones, but she sends home a lot more money than Felipa. Soledad has offered to help Nidia get a job in the night-club. She would hate to leave home, but she wants to complete her education and maybe become a lawyer.

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**You are Nidia. What are your chances of success at home? Are they better if you go to the United States? How could you improve things in La Esperanza?**

**Sonia** works in the informal sector (isn't registered as a business, doesn't pay taxes, etc.) selling shoes from a street stall. She travels across the border to purchase her supplies. She takes care of her husband who was injured in a work-related accident at the soon-to-be privatised national mine. He currently receives worker compensation for his accident. They have three children aged 20, 22, and

27. They all live at home, the middle child has a two-year-old son. They have completed third-level courses, but none of them has been able to find work related to their studies.

**You are Sonia. What will liberalisation policies mean to you? What will happen to your business if the currency devalues (if the government decides to devalue the currency to make exports cheaper)? What will you do?**

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**Rigoberta** is a member of the Maya people. The Maya way of life is based on respect for the land and communal farming. Women are seen as the 'keepers of the corn', and older women are revered for their wisdom as mothers of the community. The Maya have suffered discrimination and oppression for centuries as successive governments try to drive them off their lands in order to allow for mining. The government has recently issued mining licences to two European mining companies to carry out exploration for zinc and copper on Maya lands in the north of the country. The government argues that they need the dollars to pay off the country's debt. The government is also planning to build an export processing zone on traditional Maya lands where Rigoberta lives.

**You are Rigoberta. How will you respond? The government is offering to guarantee 200 jobs to your community. What will you do? Can you prevent the EPZ from being built?**

**Graciela** is a banana farmer. Since the school introduced charges for books and uniforms, she can no longer afford to send her children to school. In any event, she needs the two eldest (aged 9 and 11) to help with sorting the bananas according to new EU regulations. Also, the buyers say that consumers in Europe only want bright yellow bananas, so she and the children must now sort out and discard the blemished bananas, even though they taste better. She also grows tomatoes, chillies and other vegetable, which she used to sell at the local market, but recently she has found that people are buying cheaper canned tomatoes from Europe instead. Her husband Diego left for the city of El Comercio three years ago to find work. He stopped sending money six months ago, and they have had no news of him since then.

**You are Graciela. What are your choices? Should you sell your farm and move to the city?**

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**Marilu** works for an agency that recruits women to work overseas in the 'entertainment' (lap-dancing, stripping) and domestic service industries. The agency charges a 50% commission on the first year's salary, and Marilu receives 10% as her commission, but no basic salary. She is a widow. Her husband was killed in an accident at a factory 10 years ago. She has five children, the eldest three of whom (girls) are at university. She is uneasy at the idea of young women going to work in

these clubs but thinks that perhaps it is a route to a better life and that maybe they enjoy the attention. She would like to work in a different business, but she has to finish paying for the children's education and building a house for her mother.

**You are Marilu. What are your options? What will happen if you leave the agency?**

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**Teresa** is a single women with two children under three. She is a good cook and has trained as a chef. She used to work at the EPZ because the money was better than restaurant pay but was fired for organising a protest against the policy of sacking pregnant women. She could try to get a job in the EPZ again, this time at a different factory, but she is afraid she will be recognised and thrown out, or threatened. She now works as a volunteer for Women United, a women's organisation that aims to organise women in La Esperanza to protest against government policy. She loves this work and would like to continue. However, now she has no income except a small monthly expenses payment from Women United. Her mother has advised her to leave the children with her and to try to find work in another city, eight hours bus journey away. She can't bear the idea of leaving the children, but she needs to earn money. She is Mercedes' niece.

**You are Teresa. What are your choices?**

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**Mercedes** is a supervisor at the maquila. She is from the neighbouring country of El Transito. She thinks that the people of La Esperanza are lazy and do not want to work. She has been told by the factory manager to use a lot of discipline to ensure that the workers reach their quotas. She has also been told to identify troublemakers early on and fire them. When Mercedes was a worker she used to complain about the conditions too – in fact, she once was part of a workers' delegation to the capital to make a complaint about the double shift to the factory owner. Now, however, with her new salary, she is building a little house and can pay off the family's debts. Perhaps in the US, she could earn even more if she got a good job as a supervisor. She wonders whether the boss would help her get a work visa. She is Teresa's aunt.

**You are Mercedes. What options do you have to improve your position? Is there anything you can do to improve the situation of women in the maquila.**

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**Evangelina** and her husband have six children and also look after Evangelina's two nieces. They have a medium-sized farm. They have always grown their own food and cultivated maize, yucca, beans and vegetables for sale at the market in the next town. They used to buy subsidised seed for each year's harvest. Now the subsidies are gone, and they find it more and more difficult to sell because

the shops are full of cheaper products from the US. They don't understand why this is so. A local businessman has told them they should turn all their land over to growing pineapples. If the crop is good, he will buy all they can grow. They need money to pay off the debts that started mounting after floods two years ago.

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**You are Evangelina. What will you do? If you grow pineapples on your land, you will have to buy food instead of growing it. What if the businessman doesn't buy the crop?**

**Maria Fernanda** is a former trade union activist. She now works full-time with Women United, an women's organisation that aims to organise women in La Esperanza to protest against government policy. She has been thrown out of the grounds of the EPZ several times for distributing leaflets about workers' rights. She would like to organise workshops and meetings for the women to discuss their situation, but she only has a small grant from a religious organisation to fund her activities. She is concerned that the conditions of the women workers are getting worse, and anyone speaks out is fired. On the other hand, she worries that women may get into trouble and lose their jobs if they are seen talking to her.

**You are Maria Fernanda. What is the best way to work in solidarity with the women workers of the EPZ?**

# Part 2

Modular approach to facilitating economic literacy

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**Module 5: Challenging neo-liberalism: A human rights approach to the economy**

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1. **Arguing for women's rights as human rights**
  2. **Some concepts underpinning a human rights approach**
  3. **The UN human rights system and women's human rights**
  4. **The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and women's economic rights**
  5. **Making governments accountable for women's human rights**
  6. **References, resources and further reading**
  7. **Training activities**
    - 5.1 Understanding women's economic rights
    - 5.2 The Beijing Platform for Action
    - 5.3 Comparing the WTO and the BPfA
    - 5.4 Using the BPfA to strengthen policy work (I)
    - 5.5 Using the BPfA to strengthen policy work (II)

# Challenging neo-liberalism: A human rights approach

One approach to developing alternative visions of a more just and equal world and to claiming entitlements is a human rights approach. This is an approach based on using United Nations international agreements on human rights to achieve fundamental social changes and equality for all. This module gives an overview of feminist perspectives on human rights and places economic issues in the context of the economic rights guaranteed by the UN human rights system. It aims to present international human rights commitments as a framework within which women's organisations can strengthen their lobbying and advocacy work. Placing economic issues in the context of economic rights is one way of asserting that such issues are not simply matters for the government of the day to make short term policy decisions on. Economic, social and cultural rights are a prerequisite for gender equality. Moreover, the international human rights system of the UN, as a system of globally agreed targets and strategies for the achievement of equality, development and peace, potentially offers a powerful challenge to neoliberalism.

*The human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights. The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life at the national, regional and international levels, and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community.*

Vienna Declaration on Human Rights, 1993

## 1. Arguing for women's rights as human rights

Feminist activists first began to argue in the 1980s that traditional formulations of human rights did not address specific violations of women's rights (such as rape as a war crime and violence against women). There have been some successes in putting women's rights into the human

rights picture, such as the success of the women's movement in gaining recognition by the international community of women's rights as human rights at the Vienna Conference on Human Rights in 1993. However, structural and systemic discrimination against women still exists worldwide. Feminists challenge the existing structures that maintain and reinforce such power relations and the interests that are served by these processes.

A feminist approach to human rights starts from the analysis that classic interpretations of human rights are fundamentally flawed because

- women have been historically excluded from the processes of international law-making and defining human rights
- international law as a patriarchal institution privileges male interests and perspectives and subverts and marginalises those of women
- there has been a failure to recognise the complex interconnections between civil, political, economical, social and cultural rights

Traditional human rights thinking has focused largely on the civil and political dimensions of rights, including international protection of rights, such as freedom of expression, right to a fair trial, equality before the law and right to life. However, it is clear that guarantees of civil and political rights and the removal of discriminatory laws are not in themselves sufficient to ensure that women have equality with men and do not of themselves redress existing inequalities. The consideration of economic, social and cultural rights is critical to women because of the many ways in which denials of economic and social rights are gender-based and directly impact on the capacity of women to enjoy civil and political rights. Women in all parts of the world still have less economic and political power relative to men. Many women face additional barriers, such as the disproportionate burden of reproductive and care work, discriminatory traditional and cultural practices, lack of access to and information about family planning and widespread violence against women.

## 2. Some concepts underpinning a human rights approach

Three main concepts underpin the development and achievement of women's rights. These are as follows:

**Universality:** This is the idea that human rights apply everywhere and to everyone. This includes inside and outside the home and in relationships with state and non-state actors at all levels. It therefore includes international financial institutions, national governments, local businesses and employers, community, neighbours and spouses/ family members.

**Indivisibility:** A feminist analysis of human rights rejects the mainstream dichotomy/hierarchy between civil and political rights on the one hand, and economic, social and cultural rights on the other. Women's experiences demonstrate that exercising the political right to run for elected office, for example, depends upon access to economic resources and social support. The right to freedom from 'cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment' cannot be exercised by a woman subjected to domestic violence in the absence of sanctions against perpetrators, effective support services and the means of economic independence (economic and social rights). Indivisibility means that different human rights must not be treated as distinct from each other, but must be understood as mutually reinforcing and interconnected.

**Accountability:** UN human rights machinery is directed at governments. It is governments that sign up to international human rights treaties and instruments and it is governments that are obliged to uphold them. The UN's human rights instruments exist to monitor what governments do and do not do. Traditionally, however, as long as states refrained from directly violating human rights, little more was required. Women have been pushing for a concept of accountability that expands the focus on commission to include acts of omission. The women's movement has also increasingly focused attention on the reports that governments submit to UN bodies through, for example, drafting shadow or parallel reports challenging the government's assessment of its progress.

## 3. The UN human rights system and women's human rights

Many feminists worldwide have identified international human rights agreements as unifying frameworks for global activism and solidarity, and potentially as instruments of transformation. Such agreements place strong obligations on governments to fulfil human rights commitments and to take active measures to redress deep-rooted inequalities.

Feminists recognise that the fulfilment of women's human rights requires more than the removal of formal legal

*If the goal of full realisation of human rights for all is to be achieved, international human rights instruments must be applied in such a way as to take more clearly into consideration the systematic and systemic nature of discrimination against women that gender analysis has clearly indicated.*

Beijing Platform for Action  
1995

Why do some feminist activists talk about 'womens human rights' rather than simply 'women's rights'?

barriers and the guarantee of equal access to legal remedies in cases of violations of civil rights. What is required is a range of government policy measures and allocation of resources aimed at addressing the pervasive systemic and structural discrimination against women at all levels of society. A key principle of the women's human rights movement, which began in the 1990s, is that civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights are universal, interdependent and indivisible.

1948	Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)
1966	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) are opened for ratification
<b>1975-1985</b>	<b>UN Decade for Women</b>
1975	First World Conference on Women, Mexico
1979	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
1980	Second World Conference on Women, Copenhagen
1985	Third World Conference on Women, Nairobi
1993	World Conference on Human Rights, Vienna.
1995	Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing

A number of milestones on the journey to the recognition of and action on women's rights within the UN system can be identified. Three world conferences on women (held in Mexico, Copenhagen and Nairobi, respectively) during the UN Decade for Women (1975-1985) provided space for women to identify and explore issues. The Second World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna, held in 1993, was a milestone in categorising violence against women as a violation of human rights.

In 1979, governments signed the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). This is of special significance in its underlying recognition that women have historically been subjected not simply to specific areas of disadvantage but to systemic discrimination and oppression founded on hostile stereotypes and presumptions rooted in cultures, often reinforced by political and religious convictions. CEDAW was the first legally binding instrument to take a comprehensive approach to prohibiting discrimination against women and, as such, was a significant achievement for women.

CEDAW aims to be transformative, in that rather than extending the list of rights, it aims to change the context within which women's rights are violated. It prohibits

discrimination in many areas, including political and public life, economic and social life (education, employment and health care) and marriage and family life, and sets out some specific measures to eliminate discrimination against rural women.

CEDAW clearly and explicitly gives as equal priority to economic, social and cultural rights as it does to civil and political rights: Article 3 obliges states to 'take in all fields, in particular the political, social, economic and cultural fields, all appropriate measures including legislation to ensure the full development and advancement of women for the purpose of guaranteeing them the exercise and enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms on a basis of equality with men'.

#### 4. The Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA) and women's economic rights

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were signed by 189 governments in 1995. The BPfA was the first agreement to incorporate actions to assure women's rights. It includes a detailed action plan that sets out the strategies to be taken by governments to ensure equality and full human rights for women in 12 critical areas of women's lives.

### The 12 critical areas of concern

1. Poverty
2. Education and training
3. Health
4. Violence against women
5. Armed conflict
6. Economy
7. Power and decision making
8. Institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women
9. Human rights
10. The media
11. The environment
12. The girl child

The BPfA is not a legally binding document, but it is subject to constant review by the UN, and governments reported on progress in June 2000 at the Beijing+5 review. It was signed without reservation by the Irish government, and this commitment to ensuring that a gender perspective is reflected in all Irish policies and programmes was reaffirmed at the Beijing+5 Review in 2000. 'All policies and programmes' means not only those that impact on women in Ireland, but trade and aid policies affecting women in developing countries. The Beijing Platform for Action recognises the global nature of

women's oppression and the responsibilities of the governments of 'developed countries' towards 'developing countries'. It also lists a series of strategic objectives and actions to be taken by governments to achieve equality for women. A key aspect of the Platform for Action is the recognition that a strong role for women's groups is crucial to the implementation of the commitments.

A feminist approach to human rights highlights the impact that such factors as poverty, education, nutrition, accommodation, health and literacy levels have on women's ability to access a better quality of life. Economic, social and cultural rights, therefore, must be given equal priority by governments and the international community if women's human rights are to be fulfilled. The BPfA reflects this approach and recognises that the fulfilment of women's human rights requires more than the removal of formal barriers and the guarantee of equal access to legal remedies in cases of violations of civil rights. What is required is a range of government policy measures and allocation of resources aimed at addressing the pervasive systemic and structural discrimination against women at all levels of society. You will find selected extracts from the BPfA relating to the implementation of women's economic rights at the end of this module.

## 5. Making governments accountable for women's human rights

The UN is a very important institution in advancing women's rights, both in Ireland and elsewhere, and can serve as a powerful tool for women's organisations to enhance awareness of and action on their own economic rights and entitlements together with those of others.

### Mechanisms for accountability

All states are required to submit regular reports to specific UN treaty-monitoring committees, detailing the steps they are making to implement the provisions of the human rights treaties to which they are parties. The treaty committees also welcome alternative reports from non-governmental groups, which they will consider when reviewing states' compliance with the treaty. Not only can non-governmental submissions influence the policy recommendations and official statements of international bodies, but they may be used to shame the government involved into taking action on a particular case or issue.

Until 2000, there was no mechanism for making complaints of violations of the rights guaranteed in CEDAW. This represented a particular obstacle for women who wished to remedy violations that are perpetrated in the name of culture or religion, or are the result of gender-based economic exploitation. A complaints procedure in relation to CEDAW was introduced in 2000 as a response to lobbying by women's human rights activists. Unlike the complaints procedure to the ICCPR, not only individuals but also groups may make formal complaints of violations of their rights. The Optional Protocol, or amendment to CEDAW, that established the complaints procedure also established an enquiry procedure, whereby the CEDAW committee can undertake an investigation of systematic abuses of women's human rights.

*Recognition of women's rights as human rights is a "radical reclamation of humanity" and has a profound transformative potential. A women's human rights framework equips women with a way to define, analyse and articulate their experiences of violence, degradation and marginality. It also provides a common framework for developing a vast array of visions and concrete strategies for change.*

Charlotte Bunch, 1994

## 6. References, resources and further reading

Either of the following is an excellent resource on women's human rights:

**Julie Peters and Andrea Wolper** eds. 1995. *Women's Rights, Human Rights*. Boulder: Routledge Press.

**Rebecca J Cook**, ed. 1994. *Human Rights of Women: National and International Perspectives*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

A comprehensive resource on all aspects on human rights:

**Philip Alston and Henry Steiner**. 2000. *International Human Rights in Context: Law, Politics, Morals*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Further reading on a range of aspects of women's human rights:

**Niamh Reilly**, ed., 1996. *Without Reservation: The Beijing Tribunal on Accountability for Women's Human Rights*. New Brunswick: Centre for Women's Global Leadership.

**Siobhán Madden**. 2000. *Putting the Action into Beijing*. Dublin: Banúlacht.

**Mary K. Meyer and Elisabeth Prugl**, eds. 1999. *Gender Politics in Global Governance*. Boston: Rowman and Littlefield.

**Charlotte Bunch and Samantha Frost**. 1997. *Women's Human Rights: An Introduction*. New Brunswick: Centre for Global Women's Leadership. [www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/whr](http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/whr).

Sources of documents on international human rights:

Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights: [www.unhchr.ch/women/](http://www.unhchr.ch/women/)

### Web sites

International Women's Rights Action Watch (IWRAP) Asia Pacific: [www.iwraw.org](http://www.iwraw.org)

United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM): [www.unifem.org](http://www.unifem.org)

Women's Human Rights Alliance [www.whrp-ireland.org](http://www.whrp-ireland.org)

Women in Development Europe (WIDE) [www.eurosur.wide.org](http://www.eurosur.wide.org)

Human Rights Watch [www.hrw.org/women/](http://www.hrw.org/women/)

Women's Human Rights Net (WHRnet) [www.whrnet.org](http://www.whrnet.org)

Amnesty International Irish Section [www.amnesty.ie](http://www.amnesty.ie)

Policy documents on women's human rights in Ireland:

**Niamh Gaynor**, 2004. *Shadow Report to the CEDAW Committee*. Dublin: Women's Human Rights Alliance, forthcoming publication.

**Niamh Gaynor**, 2002. *Women's Human Rights*. Dublin: Women's Human Rights Alliance.

# Activities 5

## 5.1 Understanding women's economic rights

### Aim

To familiarise participants with the concept of economic rights and the principal international human rights documents

### Resources/materials

Flip chart sheets and copies of the extracts from the BPfA at the end of this module.

### Procedure

#### Stage 1

Write the following headings on two different sheets of the flip chart:

- Civil and Political Rights
- Economic Social and Cultural Rights

Ask the group what they think their rights are. Note them under the first two headings. Explain that the rights should be guaranteed under international agreements – those for which the state has responsibility. Do not note ideas such as 'the right to be happy' because these are not actionable or enforceable. Examples of civil and political rights include equal

treatment before the law, right to vote, freedom of speech, freedom of association, right to vote, freedom from arbitrary detention, right not to be subjected to inhuman or degrading treatment or torture. Examples of economic, social and cultural rights might include the rights to health, work, and education; right to adequate housing; right to a livelihood; right to own and inherit property.

### Discussion

Compare the lists. Do you think one set of rights is more important than the other?

#### Stage 2

Small group discussion (20 minutes): Ask participants in small groups to explore the following questions:

What are the barriers to women's human rights?

What do women need in order to have their full human rights?

### Discussion:

As the groups provide feedback on their discussion, bring out the structural nature of discrimination against women (refer to the core principles section in Part 1,

section I, and the concepts of gender and patriarchy in Module 1, section 1 (page 31).

### **Input**

Provide input on section 1 'Arguing for women's rights as human rights' (page 113).

### **Stage 3**

Distribute the extracts from the Beijing Platform for Action

In small groups (20 minutes) review the recommendations on economic rights under the BPfA.

Would implementation of these rights bring about significant change in discrimination against women in terms of the economy? Why? Why not?

## **5.2 The Beijing Platform for Action**

### **Aim**

To understand the concepts of indivisibility, interdependence and universality of human rights

### **Materials/resources**

Copies of the 12 critical areas of the BPfA from page 118.

### **Procedure**

In pairs or groups of three, ask participants to rank the 12 critical areas of concern

from 1 to 12 according to their importance to women in Ireland. Then ask them to rank them again, thinking of the importance to women in the South. Call the activity to an end after 10-15 minutes. Explain that there is no right answer. Ask groups to quickly give feedback on how they found the activity, what issues they ranked as 1 and 2 and why, and whether the ranking was different for women in the South and for women in Ireland and why.

### **Input**

Give a brief input on the concepts of indivisibility, interdependence and universality of human rights based on section 2 (page 115).

## **5.3 Comparing the WTO and the BPfA**

### **Aim**

To compare the international structures to protect and promote women's human rights and equality with the structures to protect and promote the rights of corporations.

### **Resource/materials**

Flip chart and pens

### **Additional reading (essential)**

Module 4, sections 7, 8 and 9.

### **Procedure**

1. Elicit the main points on the WTO and note on a flip chart.

2. Provide input comparing the WTO Charter and the Beijing Platform for Action.

3. Questions and answers

### Discussion (small group or plenary)

Who has the power at the WTO? What role does Ireland play? Are women's human rights instruments worthless because they are not legally enforceable?

What can women's groups and organisations do to promote and protect women's economic rights worldwide.

Distribute extracts from the Beijing Platform for Action (see final page of this guide).

- In small groups, review international obligations under BPfA. Which are the most relevant to women in your local area?
- Who are the policy makers you need to influence locally and nationally?
- How can you take action in solidarity with women in the South who are negatively affected by trade policy?

### Input

You could make a short input based on Module 4, section 7 (page 100) and Module 5, section 5 (page 119).

## 5.4 Using the BPfA to strengthen policy work I

### Aim

To explore how participants could use the BPfA in policy work

### Procedure

1. Brainstorm the meaning of the word 'policy'.
2. Note responses and distinguish between an NGO policy (vision or aspiration) and government policy (an agreed or proposed course of action by government).
3. Provide brief input on the importance of understanding policy: knowing who has the power and who makes the decisions – who the players are. In theory, the government listens to the interested parties and makes the best decision. For example, the IFA – always consulted on farming issues – has huge power.
4. Ask the group the following question: Where have you tried to influence policy? Divide the group into three. Each person tells her story about trying to bring about change in an institution (what they did and how they did it: campaigning, demonstrations, letter writing, protesting).
5. Each group chooses one story to work on and addresses questions such as these:
  - What worked?
  - What did not work?
  - What might they do differently?

**Discussion**

What did you learn? Have you been effective in influencing policy? Why? Why not?

In small groups, ask the participants to discuss the following:

Can you link the issues you have worked on in your policy work with the critical areas of concern of the BPfA?

In what ways can you use the BPfA to strengthen your policy work? Be specific.

## 5.5 Using the BPfA to strengthen policy work II

**Aim**

To use the BPfA as a tool for policy analysis

**Materials/resources**

Flip chart, paper and markers

**Procedure**

Explain the aims of the BPfA (to advance the position of women and to include a gender perspective in all government policies and programmes). This exercise looks at how the work of women's organisations contributes to that aim. Participants focus on the impact that their organisation's work has on implementation of the BPfA, both on the BPfA as a whole and on each of the critical areas of concern at the personal level, in terms of their membership, the wider community and at political level.

In small groups, participants spend 45 minutes to an hour working on the questions below:

- What work is your organisation doing to further the implementation of the BPfA? (This can be both work the organisation does or lobbying of government agencies or departments.)
- In the work you've identified, what are you doing in each critical area? (For example, at the level of a network, you might answer support, information to groups, representation.)
- What are the outcomes/impacts of your work at the personal, community and political levels? What about locally, regionally, nationally and internationally?
- What partnerships/alliances are you involved in and how effective are they?
- Who/what (individuals, state bodies or policies) are you trying to influence and in what way?
- If you are not working on an area, what other organisation do you know that are? Are you linked with them in any way?

**Discussion (small group or plenary)**

What gaps did you identify?

What strengths did you identify?

# Beijing Platform for Action 1995 and Women's Economic Rights

## *Recognition of women as actors in the economy:*

- The full and equal participation of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life at the national, regional and international levels and the eradication of all forms of discrimination on grounds of sex are priority objectives of the international community.
- Women contribute to the economy and to combating poverty through both remunerated and unremunerated work at home, in the community and in the workplace. The empowerment of women is a critical factor in the eradication of poverty.

## *Recommendations to governments:*

- restructure and redefine public expenditure to promote economic opportunities for women and their access to resources and recognise their basic social, training and health needs
- promote more transparent and adequate budgetary procedures at various levels to integrate the gender perspective in budgetary programming and policies, as well as the funding of programmes for equal opportunities between men and women
- restructure and target the allocation of public expenditures to promote women's economic opportunities and equal access to productive resources and to address the basic social, educational and health needs of women, particularly those living in poverty
- undertake legislation and administrative reforms to give women equal rights with men to economic resources
- seek to develop a more comprehensive knowledge of work and employment through efforts to measure and better understand the type, extent and distribution of unremunerated work

- recognise that shared work and parental responsibilities between women and men promote women's increased participation in public life and adjust employment policies to facilitate and promote the sharing of family responsibilities
- take measures to ensure equal access of women to on-going training in the workplace, including unemployed women, single parents, women re-entering the labour market and women displaced by new forms of production. Provide affordable support services, such as high-quality, flexible and affordable childcare services, that take into account the needs of working men and women.

*The BPfA also specifies several actions by governments that are relevant to multilateral and regional trading arrangements. These include*

- ensure that national policies related to international and regional trade agreements do not have an adverse impact on women's new and traditional economic activities (para 165k)
- ensure that all corporations, including transnational corporations, comply with national laws and codes, social security regulations, applicable international agreements, instruments and conventions, including those related to the environment, and other relevant laws (para 165l)

*The Beijing+5 outcomes document, adopted in July 2000, places responsibility on multilateral organisations, as well as governments for achieving equality goals. It states that*

- organisations of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund), as well as the World Trade Organisation, and other international and regional intergovernmental bodies are called upon to support government efforts to achieve full and effective implementation of the Platform for Action (para 49).



