

Concept Note

Workshop on

“International Trade and Gender Dynamics in India: A Capacity Building Workshop for the Media”

10th August, 2012, Amaltas Hall, India Habitat Centre, Lodhi Road, New Delhi

Organised by the Centre for Trade and Development, Third World Network,
Centre for Legislative Research and Advocacy in India and the Heinrich Böll Foundation

In an increasingly globalised world, the impact of trade and investment liberalisation is an important area of policy focus. In a country like India, where economic, social and gender inequalities persist historically, the gender impact of trade policy must be paid serious attention to, especially as it is increasingly evident that trade policy is not ‘gender neutral’. The nature of international trade itself is undergoing continuous changes, with autonomous liberalization being accompanied by initiatives at the WTO as well as rapid advances in bilateral preferential or free trade and investment agreements. The overall impact of trade and the regional and sectoral distribution of its benefits and losses actually determine the full and final gender impact.

The trade-gender linkages are full of contradictions. There will be areas where India will lose markets, jobs and incomes as it opens up to global competition. There may also be absolute gains in employment and incomes for women in many cases, e.g. textiles and garments, but relative inequalities increasing vis-à-vis wages, working conditions, and growing informalisation of work may increase. With the growing coverage of trade agreements including agriculture, industry, services, intellectual property rights, investment and other areas, the interactions between provisions in the sector/area specific liberalisation policies create more complicated and multilayered impacts. The domestic policy space of national governments is also getting increasingly constrained by the wide and deep coverage of trade agreements. All these have a two-way interaction with women’s access to critical physical, financial and human resources and access to basic services, with significant implications for their livelihoods, health, socio-economic status and well-being. In many cases,

the impact process is so complex that the gendered nature of it is apparent only after a deeper analysis.

An area of increasing concern with development analysts, NGOs and academics is that the trade and gender issues are not properly reported and debated in the public sphere especially in the media. But the media plays an important role in educating the common masses as well as policy makers, and can help build awareness so that the common public are not kept out of major debates and discussions on trade and gender.

With this objective in view, we propose to organise a capacity building workshop for media persons from different parts of India on the 10th of August, 2012 in New Delhi.

At this workshop, we will discuss the conceptual and empirical linkages between trade and investment liberalization and gender equality in the context of development; and the impact of the WTO and PTA/FTA provisions on gender dynamics. Simple presentations on the theme will highlight the various sectoral and regional contexts of this linkage in India. The sectors/ areas covered will be; i) agriculture and access to jobs and food; ii) industry, jobs, gender disparities; iii) services, access and employment; iv) intellectual property rights and access to food, medicines and knowledge. Cross cutting issues such as access to food, health, education, and women’s productive capacity will also be discussed through the workshop. The workshop will be interactive with inputs from the media persons representing the different regions and interest areas. The workshop will end with the screening of a short documentary on trade and gender roles in India.