

Gender in Global and Regional Trade Policy: Contrasting  
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IGTN & the Gender-Trade-Development Nexus – From the  
Margins to the Core of the Policy Process  
DRAFT

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Working paper. Please inform author if used for quotes or  
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## **IGTN & the Gender-Trade-Development Nexus – From the Margins to the Core of the Policy Process**

(Revised draft)

### **Executive Summary**

The IGTN challenges the assumption that trade is gender neutral and seeks to address the differential impact of national, regional, and international trade policies on women versus men through gender-sensitive research, advocacy, and trade literacy in order to foster greater economic justice and security for women, families, and communities globally. This paper gives an introduction to what, why, and how of the IGTN in its work to bring gender justice and equality concerns from the margins to the core of mainly international trade and but also other macro-economic issues, giving four examples.

### **What**

The International Gender and Trade Network (IGTN) is a network of feminist gender specialists, organizations, and networks who work with a gender and trade focus on gender rights and economic justice issues, providing technical information on gender and trade issues to women's groups, NGOs, social movements and governments. It is a Southern-led network that builds on South/North cooperation in the work of developing more just and democratic policy from a critical feminist perspective. It was established in 2000 with seven regions; and since 2003 IGTN is organized in eight regions: Africa, Asia, Central Asia, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, North America and the Pacific.

IGTN defines itself as a technical resource and political catalyst that addresses trade issues which are of critical importance to the social and economic empowerment of women and men in order to enlarge policy and action space for a critical feminist perspective and global action on trade and globalization issues. IGTN gives special attention to the *work of social reproduction* or the *care economy* which encompasses all the invisible, unpaid and undervalued work required to sustain and reproduce the human family and community because although women are worldwide primarily responsible for the *work of social reproduction* or the *care economy*, the care economy is generally disregarded in trade policies and negotiations and is rarely reflected in macro economic data.

The result is bad and unjust and/or at best ineffective trade and development policies viewed from a gender and economic justice perspective.

### **Why – IGTN Aims and Agenda**

The IGTN networks and coordinates to bring gender justice and equality concerns from the margins to the core of international trade and basically macro-economic issues. It seeks to set gender concerns on international, regional, and national trade agendas, to increase internal and external gender competence and capacity and exert influence on existing trade policies and processes, and to effect policy change in a gender-sensitive direction. In the short-term the aim is to influence on-going trade policy negotiations on international to community levels; in the longer-term to influence the resulting policy; and in the long-term to focus the scope of the WTO and trade agreements on specific trade issues that are gender-sensitized, i.e. that gender concerns are so to speak a “built-in” part of the WTO agenda and trade agreements. There is a danger that this long-term goal may be contradictory to the primary purpose of engendering trade policy or at least could be used as an excuse for not linking gender, trade and development concerns.

Still, an overarching goal is a serious reshaping of macroeconomic policies to ensure trade and investment promote equity and development, respect women’s human rights, and are consistent with internationally ratified agreements.

### **Fourfold Political Agenda**

The IGTN agenda has four main points:

1. To support global and regional economic integration rules and processes that build sustainability of the productive (cash economy) and social reproductive (care economy) work of all people, particularly women; and to oppose all rules and processes that compromise that work.
2. To monitor negotiations in order to expose and oppose undemocratic and intransparent trade rules in the WTO and regional trade fora. IGTN’s goal is to reduce the scope of the WTO and all trade agreements to specific trade issues.
3. To build alternatives from a feminist perspective.

4. To work to achieve just and democratic economic policy domestically and globally.

### Advocacy Objectives

The objectives of IGTN advocacy is:

1. To reassert the sovereign right and responsibility of nation states to determine their own development agenda, to regulate their economies, and to protect their communities' biological and agricultural resources (policy space);
2. To affirm the primacy of social reproduction and social development over a market-driven economy;
3. To support systems of governance, at the global, regional and national levels, that are democratic, transparent, accountable, and respectful of human rights;
4. To remove all structural and cultural barriers to women's full political participation and leadership in governmental and non-governmental spheres;
5. To advocate for gender and social impact assessments of existing trade policies with a view to their adjustment and the development of gender disaggregated data for analysis in the trade arena;
6. To reduce the scope of the WTO and all trade agreements to specific trade issue only;
7. To oppose regional and bilateral trade agreements that weaken the human, social, political, and economic rights and development of women and men.

### Issues and target groups

Gender and trade issues and the WTO and regional trade agreements are the main IGTN focus; and the target groups have been women's and development NGOs, unions, governments and trade negotiators, the WTO and other international trade agencies and institutions. However, by 2002 it was decided to broaden the target group focus to include social movements by promoting gender, trade, and development issues at the World Social Forum and since then also the Regional Social fora, reaching out to social movements and groupings, trade unions and other attending CSOs. Over the years more and more attention

has also been given to UNCTAD, especially in the run-up to UNCTAD XI in Sao Paulo, Brazil, 2004.

Four main issues areas have been in focus from the beginning: Agriculture and food security, now food sovereignty; intellectual property rights (TRIPS); and services (GATS). As the WTO agenda has developed, this list has gradually been expanded to include non-agricultural market access (NAMA) and autonomous industrialization; social reproduction has been added to GATS; TRIPS expanded to include knowledge production; and development country issues of special and differential treatment (SDT) and trade-related technical assistance (TRTA) are included.

Other related macro-economic issues have been touched upon such as debt cancellation for the most indebted countries and enforceable corporate accountability mechanism at national, regional and global levels;

### **How – the History**

Mention of possible funding for a “global women’s project” was aired at the Women’s Caucus of the Second WTO Ministerial Conference (WTOMC) in Geneva. At that time the Informal Working Group on Gender and Trade (IWGGT) was networking and coordinating cooperation on gender, trade, and development issues in relation to the WTO and UNCTAD, doing awareness-raising and advocacy on the existence of the gender-trade-development nexus, and organizing the Women’s Caucuses at the WTOMCs and had been doing so since about 1995.

The IGTN began as a “global women’s project” on gender and trade relations which was coordinated by the Center of Concern in Washington, D.C., in cooperation with Peggy Antrobus, DAWN-Caribbean. It started as a year of electronic conferencing on five-six gender and trade issues among gender and trade specialist and activists in seven regions - Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, North America and the Pacific. The conferencing culminated with the “Grenada Seminar on Gender and Trade” in December 1999, shortly after the

collapse of the Third WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle. At the Seminar, the participants decided to establish the IGTN as a group of seven autonomous networks within a framework of shared perspectives, demands and goals. The first international Steering Committee took place in the beginning of 2000 in Washington, D.C. where the structure, objectives, and methods were more precisely defined, and the IGTN was formally established.

### **How - Structure and Methods**

*Members* are individuals, organizations, and networks working on putting gender and trade issues on the international trade agenda.

The regions operate autonomously within a framework of shared perspectives, demands and goals. They are connected by a *global Steering Committee*, as well as cooperation within and across regional lines. The idea was and is to have three teams or groupings in each IGTN region which address the intersection of gender and trade via 1) research, 2) economic literacy, and 3) advocacy. The regions are organized differently, but each region has a general *Advocacy Focal Point*, a *Research Focal Point*, and an *Economic Literacy Focal Point*, who share information within and between regions. Each of these focal point teams works with its counterparts internationally to share information, strategize, and work toward common goals.

The work and influence of the IGTN is also expanding to other regions of the world, which are in the process of forming their own regional networks of gender and trade specialists and NGOs. In this way Central Asia joined the network in 2003 as an autonomous sub-region in Asia; and there are on-going discussions about a Middle East or North Africa region.

The *global Steering Committee* was constituted at the Grenada Seminar, with representation of general Advocacy Focal Point coordinators from and for each region, a couple advisors, a Global Economic Literacy Focal Point representative, and a Global Research Focal Point representative plus a couple representatives from the global Secretariat. The global Steering Committee

works to facilitate shared work, to create and coordinate global strategies for more just and democratic economic policies from a feminist perspective, and to identify and coordinate funding possibilities .

The *global Secretariat* was placed at Center of Concern, Washington D.C. from 2000 to 2005 and was moved to Brazil at the end of 2005 in line with the original intention to be based in the South. It facilitates the Steering Committee networking and monthly bulletins and is responsible for the IGTN webpage, major fund-raising for the network, and the global economic reporting to donors. The global Secretariat is specifically responsible for fund-raising for the global Secretariat, the Geneva Office, and participation at joint events such as the WTOMCs and World Social Forum. The regional networks are responsible for their own funding and participation in joint events and meetings and for contributions to the global Secretariat.

From March 2003 the IGTN was able to add a Geneva Desk, consisting of one officer, to the network structure. This has greatly improved the IGTN's ability to monitor WTO process and negotiations, as well as UNCTAD events, establish a good cooperation with other Geneva-based international NGOs and NGO-networks, establish a network of contacts with CSOs, trade officials, government representatives, and international institutions and institutes based in Geneva, and advocate IGTN positions.

### **The Analysis**

Basically the analysis is that trade agreements have far-reaching impacts on the lives of people all over the world. These impacts vary based on gender, occupation, nation, class and many more factors. The IGTN is committed to analyzing the gendered impacts of trade and the links between trade, economic production and social reproduction as a means to further develop a critical feminist agenda relative to trade and investment in order to foster greater economic justice and security for women, families and communities globally. The regions follow ongoing WTO negotiations as well as particular trade negotiations, including the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA / ALCA),

Cotonou and Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and trade bloc negotiations relevant to the regions. Each region also undertakes specific research, economic literacy, and advocacy projects focusing on critical questions concerning gender and trade in their region. This information can be accessed through regional resources, by trade agreement, or through specific issue areas on the IGTN website: Agriculture, Developing Country Issues, Gender and Trade, Human Rights, Intellectual Property Rights, Investment, Services, and Sustainable Development.

### **Regional Differences**

The regional differences between the IGTN regional networks in regards to structure, organization, history and tradition, approaches to and treatment of issues gives both advantages and difficulties, strengths and weaknesses. The main issue foci of the different regions can be found on the IGTN website under the descriptions of the IGTN regions. However, there are also differences in the focus of analysis and what analysis is sought and needed and in advocacy and lobby focus and type. Some of these differences are related to differences in member constituencies of the regions. There are of course also intra-regional and national differences in focus within the eight regions.

Four “cases” or examples will be described:

#### **Regional differences – IGTN-Europe**

All regions are involved in an on-going dialogue among women and institutions on how to incorporate a gender agenda and perspective into trade negotiations. The main focus of the research, economic literacy, and advocacy is on gendered impacts within regions, international links, macro-policies, and how these policies affect their regions. However, for Europe the network is comprised mainly but not exclusively of development NGOs and –networks, development specialist and activists, who focus on North-South development issues and development impacts in the South and how European and macro-economic/trade policies impact developing countries and work closely with Southern partners. Although network members in new EU member countries and countries in accession do



research and analyze internal or national impacts trade impacts, for example the BGRF-WIDE water supply study, Faites vos jeux, Messieurs! Or A Case Study on the Impact fo GATS in Bulgaria\*, May 2004, the European region's focus is not usually on how trade policy impacts European lives.\* WIDE and partners have also managed earlier to include ("sneak in") some European trade impact and gender analysis by getting funding for comparative trade bloc analysis of EU and Latin American/Mexican trade bloc agreements.\*\* But the main point here is that European development NGOs and -networks (NGDOs) are not often able to analyze European impacts of trade policies partly due to their mission statements and focus and partly due to subsequent funding possibilities. Alliances with other CSOs and actors who have different mission statements and foci could remedy this. However, in the meantime this outward focus characteristic of IGTN-Europe network constituencies differentiates the network from the other Southern IGNT regional networks.

Just IGTN-North America shares common advocacy concerns with IGTN-Latin America, IGTN-Europe, GENTA, and IGTN-Caribbean share common advocacy concerns in regards to the Cotonou Agreement and its Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs) and the disappearing preferential treatment advantages, that ACP countries are losing due to WTO compatibility issues. However, this cooperation usually focuses on impacts in the South and not on impacts in the EU.

The debate and negotiations on the EU Bolkenstein Directive effecting service delivery within the EU may afford some opportunity for linking internal EU gender impact analysis with analysis of service negotiations in general.

#### Regional differences – Gender Mainstreaming Trade Policy and Processes\*\*\*

Since 1995 many in the global women's movement have supported gender mainstreaming initiatives as a means to assess and integrate gender concerns into policies, programs, legislation and institutions at all levels. It is the main approach used and supported by women in development organizations, women's organizations, and many international institutions. It's has been and is a means

to push governments to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and its updates in 2000 and 2005. However, it is a controversial and critical strategy and issue in regards to trade policy advocacy, being a question of whether to mainstream gender into the existing development model as a patch on a faulty model or whether the current model must be critiqued first or whether a transformative gender mainstreaming is part of the process of critical critique that can promote change in the current model. Gender mainstreaming in regards to the WTO was much discussed at IGTN-sponsored strategy meetings as well as other NGO-sponsored seminars at the Fifth WTOMC in Cancun, Mexico, in 2003. IGTN concluded that there is still much to be discussed and analyzed; but the general IGTN position is a strong critique of the gender mainstreaming approach as being too narrow. The fear is that instead of ensuring that gender analysis is placed at the core of trade policies, gender mainstreaming has too often marginalized women's concerns from the main political agenda and from macro-economic policies. However, if the political will and end goal of the government or institution applying a gender mainstreaming approach is the promotion and protection of human rights, gender justice, and sustainable development, and the purpose of gender mainstreaming is to achieve these priorities, then this approach and strategy would be useful.

Therefore questions surrounding gender mainstreaming, what kind, and its use are critical because answers to these questions will eventually determine where and how countries, women's groups, gender justice advocates, and other NGDO and CSO representatives use their political energies. The range of issues include such questions as gender clauses in trade agreements, a gender committee at the WTO, an external gender watchdog committee, how to ensure women succeed in the current trade negotiations, a feminist gender critique of the direction of trade negotiations, a demand for equity that includes not only gender, but also equity among peoples and nation states, and an analysis of current negotiations to discover how to develop agreements that include issues critical to women, such as social development, human rights, food security and poverty eradication.

In light of this on-going discourse, the IGTN takes the position that a *feminist gender critique* of trade liberalization and the development of trade agreements, which includes issues and concerns critical to women, is the present approach and strategy. The IGTN is wary of other approaches, such as a gender clause in trade agreements or a gender working group in the WTO, which are in danger of marginalizing both the issue and women instead of bringing gender justice concerns to the core of trade policy and negotiation.

#### Issue advocacy and lobby – GATS\*\*\*\*

The integration of the gender question and analysis into trade negotiations on services is absolutely necessary because services have unquestionable differential gender impacts through sectors of the economy they affect.

The liberalization of trade in services, particularly those essential to human and livelihood development such as water, sanitation, electricity, health and education have enormous impact in all areas of society. This impact is differentiated and gendered, not “gender blind”; and in general, women are potentially affected as consumers and family providers more than men by liberalization of services. Because of socio-cultural patterns in most economies, women are expected to assume a disproportionate share of family and community support responsibilities. Were costs of essential services to decline and availability of these increase, women have the opportunity to purchase services that they might otherwise provide for themselves (e.g. hauling water and laundry) and to spend less time acquiring the goods needed for family welfare. \*\*\*\*

On the other hand, if costs increase and family resources decline in relation to the cost of services available, women typically compensate by producing the services themselves in order to reduce the economic cost to the family (e.g. provision of care for the elderly or children). Or they may also deprive themselves and young females in their families of education and health services in order to save money and/or redirect their time to earning money. \*\*\*\*

Using a feminist economic critique of the process of liberalization in the trade in services highlights that liberalization of essential services can not be sustainable without addressing equitable access concerns or ensuring a single-tier delivery system vs. a two- tiered system: In essence, those who can afford to buy services will enjoy them and those who can not afford to buy services will either experience diminished access or no services at all. \*\*\*\*

Key political and social issues that negotiations in services raise are the government's role and responsibilities in providing essential services to their populations which have been understood as government's responsibilities within social contracts. Some services are also human rights, which under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, governments are required to ensure for all persons living within their jurisdiction (for example health, education, access to water and sanitation).\*\*\*\*

GATS provisions and FTA negotiations do not technically demand the privatization of public services, but if a country agreed to allow a certain service sector to be traded, then the legal requirements of the agreements would apply to that sector, whether they are public or private services. This could mean that private sector providers would be free to enter that market. Public and private providers have naturally different priorities and therefore serve communities differently. A private service provider has profit-making as a main objective and has no obligation by itself to guarantee the service to people who can not afford it, while the public sector has the obligation of serving all citizens.\*\*\*\*

Services essential to social reproduction should be removed from GATS and other regional negotiations until a development, gender and social impact assessment of negotiations commitments is completed. \*\*\*\*

Negotiations on trade in services should respect and integrate developmental and negotiating concepts, such as: *The Right to Protect, Right to development, Integration of Gender Considerations, Special and Differential Treatment and the concept of Single Undertaking*. Countries must maintain their sovereign right and

responsibility to develop domestic regulations to protect social common good, gender equality, environmental sustainability and development goals.\*\*\*\*

One possible way to implement developmental principles is through the enhancement and observance of national legislation in accordance to labor, social and human rights regulations and standards. Governments have the responsibility to ensure equitable access to essential services and to manage the consequences of commercial competition when such services are opened to foreign services providers. Even in the context of the GATS Agreement, there exists opportunity to address *performance requirements* for investors and foreign providers, in order to regulate the service industries, make appropriate request to trading partners and manage market conditions, so basic human and labour rights are respected and observed.\*\*\*\*

At least in Denmark, many NGDOs, the government and parliamentarians did not foresee that GATS negotiations would be a hot spot of the Hong Kong negotiations, although K.U.L.U.-Women and Development, Denmark, an IGTTN-Europe member, feared this danger because services are so vital an issue area from a gender justice perspective. The agreement reached by WTO members in Hong Kong is particularly worrying because it endorses the concept of plurilateral negotiations where any member or group of members may present requests or collective requests to other member(s) in any specific sector or mode of supply, identifying their objectives for the negotiations in that sector or mode of supply. The major concern with this provision is that countries, particularly those with small and vulnerable economies and limited technical resources, will be more constricted in exercising their right to determine their development policy and face greater pressure to enter into negotiations and accept trade deals promoted by, and more favorable to the richer and politically more powerful countries.\*\*\*\*

Plurilateral negotiations are a breach of the existing principles, objectives, flexibilities, and legal structure for services negotiations as established in the WTO's General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which only recognizes the bilateral request-offer process as the main method for negotiating services

commitments. The Hong Kong text on services aims to accelerate the liberalization process in the South in sectors that are crucial for development, particularly for women's development, such as essential services like water, sanitation, education, health, infrastructure and energy.\*\*\*\*

#### Issue advocacy and lobby – Special Products and Special Safeguard

##### Mechanisms\*\*\*\*

No value added came out of Hong Kong on the designation of Special Products (SPs) and treatment of the Special Safeguard Mechanisms (SSM). Instead, paragraph 7 of the Hong Kong Ministerial text states that "developing country Members will have the flexibility to self-designate an appropriate number of tariff lines as Special Products guided by indicators based on the criteria of food security, livelihood security and rural development. Developing country Members will also have the right to have recourse to a Special Safeguard Mechanism based on import quantity and price triggers, with precise arrangements to be further defined". The language of the Ministerial text is more ambiguous than that of the 2004 July Framework. (Paragraph 41 on SPs and paragraph 42 on SSM of Annex A of General Council Decision) And negotiators still have to define what an "appropriate number" will be which keeps open the possibility that even this important concession to developing countries will prove meaningless if in the end only a few tariff lines can be designated as Special Products. SPs and SSM are crucial negotiating issues for developing countries, particularly if they are to have the policy space to protect women farmers whose work is often fundamental to guaranteeing local food security and household incomes.

A little success story for IGTN advocacy and an important milestone in the advancement of gender considerations in trade policy was reached in 2005, when the G33 countries explicitly included gender considerations as an important element for food security in an official submission to the WTO. This accomplishment was precipitated by the IGTN briefing paper, "Incorporating Gender Considerations for the Designation of Special Products in WTO Agriculture Negotiations." (Available online at <http://www.igtn.org/page/568/1>.)

## **Closing Remarks**

Since IGTN's establishment, the gender-trade-development issue as well as IGTN has gained visibility through the various activities and outreach the IGTN has pursued. The issue of gender and trade continues to gain momentum in various global arenas and members of IGTN are regularly invited to participate in meetings and discussions on the topic, although actual funding sources for the gender and trade and development work in general seems to be dwindling and doesn't appear to match the current rhetoric of high priority for gender equality and development efforts. Issue visibility, awareness raising, and agenda-setting is progressing, as is capacity building within the network and outreach to others through advocacy efforts up to and at international events; while a concrete thumbprint in the form of improved and gender-sensitive negotiation processes and trade policy remains the challenge. But success stories as in the case of the IGTN Briefing Paper on Special Products.

Increased IGTN visibility also brings challenges to the Network's continued development, as different political positions regarding gender and trade emerge; but the journey of gender equality and development concerns from the margins to core of trade policy and negotiation is underway.

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For information for *other IGTN Regional Focal Points* see the IGTN website.

*IGTN website:* [www.IGTN.org](http://www.IGTN.org)

*IGTN Monthly Bulletins:* [www.IGTN.org](http://www.IGTN.org). Also for subscriptions.

### **Acronyms**

BGRF - Bulgarian Gender Research Foundation (

CSO – Civil Society Organization

EPA - Economic Partnership Agreement

FTA – Free Trade Agreement

FTAA / ALCA - Free Trade Area of the Americas

GATS – General Agreement on Trade in Services

IGTN – International Gender & Trade Network

NGO – Non-governmental Organization

NGDO – Non-governmental Development Organization

SDT – Special and Differential Treatment

SPs – Special Products

SSM – Special Safeguard Mechanism

TRTA - Trade-related Technical Assistance

TRIPS – Trade-related Intellectual Property Rights

WIDE - Network Women in Development Europe

WTO – World Trade Organization

WTOMC– World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference



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