Gender Equality in EU Trade Agreements: Perspectives from the South

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Hearing on Gender Equality in EU Trade Agreements. Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) - European Parliament
Gender and Trade issues

- Gender and Trade and Investment Issues in developing countries
- EU Trade agreements and developing countries
- EU trade agreements and in developing countries
- Challenges, Constraints and Opportunities around EU Trade and gender equality and the empowerment of women in the global South
- Gender Equality and EU Trade agreements: some pointers for the proposed Report
A recent joint, IMF, World Bank and WTO paper, ‘trade is leaving too many individuals and communities behind, notably in advanced economies’…and adjustment to trade can bring a human and economic downside that is frequently concentrated, sometimes harsh, and has often been prolonged,’ (IMF et al, March 2017, p.4).
The report goes on to argue that trade can negatively impact groups of workers, some communities and that import competition can have harsh impacts. Ultimately, the report argues that the right policies can benefit and uplift those who have been left behind. Such policies can ease adjustment to trade and strengthen overall economic flexibility and performance.
They point to the importance of phasing in liberalisation (to help to avoid labour market bottlenecks and congestions, and to buy time to put in place domestic mitigation measures, including temporary import safeguards.)
Domestic trade impact mitigating policies, the IMF et al argues, could be bolstered by International cooperation that fosters soft law provisions of trade agreements), standards that in RTAs’ that takes into account local conditions, dialogue and cooperation on macroeconomic policies and the role of supportive domestic policies.
This recognition and recommended actions are some of what Gender and trade activists (such as the WIDE + group here in Brussels) have been calling for the last two decades!!!
Gender, trade and investment issues in developing countries

Women in trade: trade sensitive sectors (agriculture, clothing etc., and including cross-border informal traders)

Trade shocks/adjustment impacts on women and men...

New issues: GVCs, MEGA Trade Blocs

Trade policy filters through the macro, meso and micro levels via its impact on:

- Monetary/Fiscal/Social (supplementary role to trade policy in terms of safety nets and trade adjustment assistance)/Labor market policies

Political restructuring & social transformation

Sustainable livelihoods

Health (care), sexual health and reproductive rights
Gender and trade issues in developing countries Framing

Gender issues and outcomes emanating from globalisation and trade liberalization include…

- Feminisation of labour market
- $\uparrow$ or $\downarrow$ access to economic and social resources (land, credit, technology & training) for women relative to men
- $\uparrow$ or $\downarrow$ unpaid work in home and community
- $\downarrow$ tariff $\Rightarrow$ government budgets $\Rightarrow$ cuts in social programs or $\uparrow$ in regressive taxes—impacts women more so than men
Gender and trade 2

- gender-differentiated impacts of the interplay between existing gender inequality and trade policies include:
  - gender specific effects of trade-induced fiscal adjustment
  - gender specific effects of trade-induced employment effect
  - gender effects of internal market adjustment.
  - Sectoral impacts: Agriculture, Services, Non Agricultural Market access
  - Domestic regulations, Govt. Procurement Policies & Migration
Gender and sustainable Trade-Development Agenda

G&T activists and feminist researchers have thus focused on influencing how international trade agreement and hence, national trade policy, which are based upon these agreements, shapes and re-shapes men’s and women’s time burden, access to essential services critical to social reproduction and access to employment.

Reshaping the impact of trade liberalization on gender equality and gender equality and women’s economic empowerment outcomes

Forcing the explicit examination of gender at the analytical and policy levels of trade discussions

A commitment to trade that fosters sustainable and equitable development
EU Trade agreements and developing countries

- GSP
  - GSP+
  - EBA
  - EPA
- FTAs
- WTO (including Trade facilitation & Aid for Trade)
- TISA
EU Trade/Investment agreements and Gender Issues in the South

- Impacts on Livelihoods & well being
- Employment
- MSMEs
- Public services
- Public (Government Procurement)
Challenges, Constraints and Opportunities around EU Trade and gender equality and the empowerment of women in the global South

**Challenges**
- Distributional effect of trade
- Unpaid care work
- Export promotion
- GVCs
- Trade Facilitation

**Opportunities**
- Gender responsive interventions
- Support and policy space for domestic policy
- Soft law in trade provisions (a la IMF et al)
Gender Equality and EU Trade agreements: some pointers for the proposed Report

Missing components in TAs now

assessment of development, social and equity gaps and relation to implementation of TA

Transfer costs/burden of adjustment on unpaid care work

New direction & way forward
Towards SMART gender sensitive and gender responsive Trade Policies & Agreements

- Strategic
- Multifunctional
- Accountable
- Responsive (to gender equality, women’s empowerment and poverty eradication concerns and priorities)
- Transparent
Thank you

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