



**at the WTO Ministerial in Geneva  
30 Nov – 2 Dec 2009**

Nothing more could attest to the failure of the neoliberal dogma than the current **global crises**. Pure faith in the market as the sole and most efficient allocator of resources for society has dominated all aspects of economic policy (finance, trade, investments, public services delivery) and had negative consequences on people's lives across nations, classes, ethnicities and gender.

More than ever, **the fallacy of unbridled trade liberalization** as a policy approach to achieve growth has been unmasked by the crisis. For one side, trade liberalization processes were linked to financial services deregulation, contributing for speculative bubbles to emerge rather frequently, thus increasing instability. On the other side, the liberalization of trade in goods, services and investment has meant greater integration of the economies, without the necessary protection of local production, people's livelihoods, gender equality and human rights. That meant developing countries became even more vulnerable to shocks coming from the North. One thing the financial crisis has made clear: there is no such thing as a level playing field. Which Southern country can compete with an American industry bailed-out with billionaire stimulus packages? In an unequal system, the less developed must have Special and Differential Treatment.

In this process of growing **trade and investment liberalization** – that deepened the international division of labor – **gender inequalities have played a substantive role**. The search for cheap labor profited in many countries and regions from the increase in gender inequalities – and hence from **female labor**, which is **instrumental to globalized production**.

Furthermore, many developing countries have lost their capacities for food self-sufficiency. The penchant for **export-oriented industrialization and agriculture** without concomitant linkages to the domestic economy has also been proven unsustainable as export demand in most developed countries fall to their lowest levels in light of the global recession. The **food crisis** has likewise taken the toll on women since food security in the household has always been one of the **socially-assigned roles for women**.

Further, **unsustainable patterns of production and consumption** in industrialized countries continue to **stress global natural resources** and have created risks associated with **climate change: the North continues to incur an ecological debt to the South**. Nevertheless, it is still those impoverished countries in the South that find themselves compelled to export more in order to pay off their ever-increasing financial debts.

Liberalization **weakens even further the role and capacity of the state** to provide public services, thus limiting access of the poor to public education and health care, specially women and girls as in many societies families tend to prioritize boys education and health care when those services are privately handled and there is a lack of resources in the family.

Further, women's burden is increased because, by not taking reproductive work into account – to which women are primarily responsible –, these development policies are based on the **assumption that women's work may be expanded to replace the cut in public services provision**.

## **1. THE AGREEMENT ON AGRICULTURE (AOA), FOOD SOVEREIGNTY AND THE RIGHT TO FOOD**

Trade liberalization in agriculture fostered by the AoA has diminished the capacity of developing countries to protect their domestic agriculture from the deluge of cheap and highly-subsidized agricultural imports from developed countries. This has led to the bankruptcy of local food producers and loss of food security for many small farmers and laborers in the South.

On account of their socially ascribed roles, women everywhere become default providers of food and other needs of social reproduction in the face of market and state failures. As production and exchange conditions become less regulated, women are facing increased tensions as they struggle with the work demands of both production and unpaid social reproduction.

Furthermore, women continue to have more difficulty than men in acquiring land, agricultural credit, and market access. Women small-scale farmers often lack the equipment required for food production on a commercial scale. This situation reached a critical point during the food crisis and more recently the financial crisis and the credit constraints it entails.

- **Ensuring food sovereignty and the right to food for peoples and nations should be at the heart of any rural development and trade policy.**
- **The WTO disciplines on agricultural trade liberalization have sacrificed food sovereignty in favor of profit-driven transnational agribusiness. For this reason, agriculture must be taken out of the WTO.**

## **2. GENERAL AGREEMENT ON TRADE IN SERVICES (GATS), SOCIAL REPRODUCTION, FINANCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES**

Trade in Services has always been a fundamental issue for IGTV because the liberalization of services had a clear impact on public provision of basic services and therefore on women's increased unpaid work.

Technically, services liberalization does not mandate privatization, but the logic of the process opens the way for greater privatization. Continued pressure for progressive liberalization is reducing the flexibility and policy options available to developing and developed countries alike.

In the absence of public provision of basic services, women are likely to increase their load of unpaid work in order to fulfill the gaps of services the family cannot find in the public system or pay for in the market.

In times of crises, these risks are increased as there is an overall stress on household budgets due to less credit liquidity. Yet, while it is now common sense to talk about re-regulation of the financial sector in order to avoid future speculative bubbles and credit crunches, WTO negotiations paradoxically contain, under the Financial Services Agreement (FSA), a whole agenda of deregulation that will do nothing but maintain "business as usual" or worst, increase the likelihood of future crises.

Another critical issue in GATS negotiations is the liberalization of environmental services. In a moment when COP15 is being converted to a business fair and the environment is being negotiated as a commodity, the WTO is once more playing a role in marketizing nature.

- **Services essential to social reproduction should be excluded a priori from GATS.**
- **Financial services should not be further liberalized and previous deregulation should be revised in view of the needed policy space to respond to the financial crisis.**
- **No environmental services negotiation should be undertaken in the WTO in order to avoid the mercantilization of life in favor of transnational corporations.**

## **3. NON-AGRICULTURAL MARKET ACCESS (NAMA) AND AUTONOMOUS INDUSTRIALIZATION**

Developing countries are being prevented from pursuing an industrialization strategy that uses a combination of trade policies and domestic investment policies similar to those used by developed countries when they were at earlier stages of development. De-industrialization can be the expected result. Local industries will collapse because of their inability to compete with cheap foreign imports and better technology.

Women are heavily involved in many of the sectors covered by NAMA as countries have relied on women's work as a basis for competitive advantage.

- **Stop de-industrialization through tariff harmonization and/or tariff elimination.**
- **Strengthen domestic regulation and non-tariff measures that fulfill national social objectives.**

## **4. TRADE RELATED ASPECTS OF INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS (TRIPS) AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION**

The WTO must confine itself to trade issues. Therefore, trade-related issues that lie within domestic policy, not international trade policy, such as intellectual property rights, must be removed from WTO disciplines.

The restrictions on access to affordable medicines to treat endemic diseases have negative impacts on the health demands of social reproduction.

The most fundamental opposition to TRIPS lies in its patenting of life forms and its direct assault on the sovereign rights and responsibilities of nations and indigenous peoples to protect their traditional knowledge and biodiversity. Women, as custodians of traditional knowledge, are systematically ignored by TRIPS.

- **TRIPS should be removed from the WTO.**

**FINALLY**, it is clear that no matter how much the **trade liberalization agenda** has proven to be the engine of the failed development model and to have critically vulnerabilized developing countries, it continues to be promoted as something to be pursued.

Trade liberalization without the appropriate redistribution and domestically decided economic strategies benefited only a minority, while **weakening women's participation in both political and economic decision-making**.

Given all this, it is shocking that Global Governance spaces such as G-20 defends the resumption of the Doha Round of Negotiation as a solution to the multiple crises that trade liberalization has helped to create and spread at the first place. **The upcoming WTO Ministerial, from 30 November to 2 December, ten years after Seattle, is a symbol of the insistence on a failed economic and development model in urgent need of replacement.**

**For all of this, we continue to say: NO TO THE WTO AGENDA! NO TO THE WTO DOHA ROUND!**