UNIT 2 GLOBALISATION AND GENDER

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Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to understand:

- the processes of globalisation and their differentiated impacts on marginalised populations and women;
- how globalisation contributes to enhanced gender inequality; and
- how the negative effects of globalisation can be minimised by mainstreaming gender in our social and economic policies.

2.1 INTRODUCTION: GLOBALISATION PROCESSES AND THEIR IMPACTS

Within cross cultural perspectives, it is important to discuss the issue of globalisation and gender. The phenomenon of globalisation which has impacted our society in numerous ways, has particularly affected the everyday lives of women, especially from developing countries. In this unit we will study the implications of globalisation on gender, with special focus of women’s work and poverty among women. Let us begin by first understanding what we mean by globalisation.

Globalisation refers to a number of events that have been rapidly changing the world, especially since the 1980s. It is primarily driven by the global economy, mainly the policies of privatisation (selling government owned assets and businesses to private multinational companies)\(^1\) and deregulation (lifting trade restrictions, easing of government regulation, allowing foreign businesses to operate within our country, and floating of national currencies in the global market place).\(^2\)

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\(^1\) Prior to the 1980s, in most of the countries, governments were handling all the businesses and governments owned all the assets in a country.

The ultimate goal of globalisation processes is to have a privatised economy, which allows a healthy competition for goods and services within the free market (across national borders). It is believed that this enables people to have access to better services and products at lower prices, eventually leading to a better standard of living, or, human well-being. Along with the diffusion of goods, services, and capital, globalisation also involves diffusion of technology, information, culture, and people across national borders (Çağatay and Ertürk 2004), and all this has led to fundamental changes in human institutions in practically all societies across the globe.

Since the mid-1980s, many scholars in the social sciences have studied the causes, scope, and impact of globalisation (Meyer 2006:83). Along with economic integration of different countries, globalisation has also brought industrialisation to the developing countries, which has led to economic growth in these regions. Since the 1980s, many Asian countries have emerged as significant manufacturers of products such as textiles, steel, cars, electronics, computer equipment, etc. This has led to the creation of jobs for millions of people in these countries.

As a result, one important trend worldwide has been that there has been an increase in the contribution of the secondary sector (manufactured products or material goods) and tertiary sector (essential services) to the gross domestic product (GDP) of most countries. This means that there has been an increase in jobs in the secondary and tertiary sectors. Growth in tertiary sector, however, has been greater than the secondary sector. And the relative contribution of the primary sector (agriculture, mining, forestry, and fishing) to the GDP has been declining steadily.

This trend in the global economy is closely related to skill differentiation. The unskilled and semi-skilled jobs (mainly in the primary and secondary sectors) are primarily taken up by the less privileged sections of the society, whereas skilled jobs of the service sector are occupied by upper income groups of the society. Wage differences between the skilled and unskilled jobs have also grown sharply, creating heightened disparities between these groups. On a broader level, disparities between rural and urban areas, developed and developing countries have also increased. Effects of globalisation have also differed across groups of class, race, ethnicity and gender.

Many researchers have said that globalisation is a double-bladed phenomenon (Çağatay and Ertürk 2004) with unequal distribution of benefits and harms. Trade liberalisation is not inherently welfare producing; it can produce and re-produce inequality, social disparities and poverty at the same time as it expands wealth (Sen, 1996:132).

Today the global system is marked with widening income disparities, economic growth disparities, human capital disparities such as, life expectancy, nutrition, infant and child mortality, adult literacy and enrolment ratio. Along with this are disparities in the distribution of global economic resources and opportunities and globalisation adds to this. In such a scenario, it is the interests of the poor and under privileged that are most affected and amongst them of the women.

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4 Such as finance, insurance, real estate, wholesale, retail, motor trade, catering and accommodation, transport and communications.
The dominance of rich nations, multinational corporations and international capital over markets, resources and labour in the developing countries through trade, aid and technology transfer has greatly weakened the capacity of nation states and governments to promote human development and offer protection to the poor people. Since the resources for the social sector come out of an ever-shrinking common pool, the burden on women is much more. The worst hit in this transformation is the unorganised or informal sector, marked with income disparity and dominated by the poor and under privileged. (Pande, 2001, 1)

Apart from changes associated with global trade, the other facets of globalisation are increased migration, spread of global culture, development of the internet and easier communication and transportation around the world, accelerated development and transfer of technologies in all spheres (including reproductive technologies), tourism, etc. All these have both positive and negative dimensions and also differentiated impacts on men and women. However, detailed discussion on these is beyond the scope of this unit. We shall concentrate here on impact of trade liberalisation on gender equality.

### 2.2 GLOBALISATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

While we stated in the beginning that the major transformation in global economy occurred around 1980s, we need to understand that the processes of globalisation are closely associated with colonialism and capitalism, which have transformed traditional economies over the last couple of centuries. “All scholars agree that colonialism and capitalism restructured traditional economies in a way which had a profound impact on women’s economic activities, on the nature of sexual division of labour, and on the kinds of social and political options which remained open to women. However, there is considerable debate about the exact nature of the effects of these processes on women’s lives. Scholars like Boserup (1970) and Rogers (1980) have suggested that capitalist exploitation combined with eurocentric ideas about the roles and activities proper to women led to the destruction of women’s traditional rights in society, and undermined their economic autonomy. Other writers have pointed out that it may be wrong to imagine that the pre-colonial/ pre-capitalist world was one where women had a significant degree of independence. However, the penetration of capitalism into subsistence economies, through the growth of commercial agriculture and wage labour, is acknowledged as having generally deleterious effect on rural women. A number of authors have stressed that the development of intensive agriculture and the introduction of new forms of technology discriminated against women. An increasing market in land and labour, together with changes in land tenure systems and developing migrant labour, also worked against the interests of women” (Moore 1988:74-5).

The transformation of global economy around the 1980s has accentuated the disadvantaged position of women in developing countries. Feminist researchers and activists have repeatedly pointed to a variety of gender biases of structural adjustment policies⁵ (Çağatay and Ertürk 2004). In the case of Morocco, Skalli

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⁵ Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) are economic policies for developing countries that have been promoted by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) since the early 1980s by the provision of loans conditional on the adoption of such policies. SAPs are designed to encourage the structural adjustment of an economy to promote privatisation and deregulation.
(2001) mentions that the social effects and costs of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) have proved to be specifically detrimental to women in low-income households and made their status even more vulnerable. The situation is quite similar in other developing countries of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

The differentiated impacts of globalisation processes on men and women are because of a number of reasons. Firstly, a discrepancy exists in almost all economies between women and men’s access to resources, knowledge, ownership and control over assets. Patriarchal societies like the Indian society, where men have authority and control over property, men traditionally hold a privileged position as compared to women, who are seen as subordinate. Patriarchy also manifests itself in the social, legal, political, and economic organisations, and it is seen that globalisation has heightened already existing biases in patriarchal societies. Discussing the case of Morocco, Skalli (2001:76) states that “the patriarchal structure of the society operates at all levels to position women in lower status than men. Patriarchal ideology and systemic gender biases have denied women not only equal educational and employment opportunities and treatment before the law, but also equal access to and control over resources, adequate health services, housing, social welfare, and support. These are important social indicators that have a direct bearing on the incidence of female poverty and reflect the different levels at which social exclusion is produced, justified and perpetuated.”

Discrepancy also exists between men and women in terms of patterns of paid and unpaid work, wages, ability to generate income, educational patterns and political and economic power (Çağatay and Ertürk 2004). Women’s low educational opportunities and skill training have a direct bearing on female work pattern. Women get caught in the cycle of exploitation and underpayment as they increasingly occupy the low-paying unskilled jobs. There exists salary gap between working men and women, and many women continue to work below the minimum wage. In rural areas, female labour around the world continues to go unrecognised and unpaid, as it falls under the category of farm work or income-generating activities within home, in areas such as arts and crafts, weaving, and cottage industries. Mies (1982) describes in her study of lace-makers of Andhra Pradesh (India) that growing impoverishment of the peasant agricultural sector has led women in poorer agricultural households to take up lace-making (for private exporters) as a way of generating supplementary income. These women are invisible as workers because of the prevailing and overriding ideology that they are really only ‘housewives’ who happen to be using their leisure time in a profitable way. Thus, women generate supplementary income for the household without altering the sexual division of labour or the nature of gender relation in the society. Consequently, women’s insertion into the global market production system has merely served to reinforce existing gender relations (Moore 1988:83-85).

Let us now take a closer look at how globalisation is said to have contributed to growing poverty among women.

2.2.1 Feminisation of Poverty and Female-headed Households

Research into the social impacts and gender-specific effects of structural adjustment policies and studies on the proliferation of female-headed households have led to increased attention to the notion of feminism of poverty. There is
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a growing perception around the globe that poverty is becoming increasingly feminised, that is, an increasing proportion of the world’s poor are female. A 1992 UN report found that the number of rural women living in poverty in the developing countries increased by almost 50% between 1970 and 1990 (an awesome 565 million) and majority of them lived in Asia and in Sub-Saharan Africa (Moghadam 2005:2).

There are different measures of poverty in economics, however, whether measured by income/consumption or the broader array of entitlements/capabilities indicators, the incidence of poverty among women appears to be on the increase (ibid: 4-5). Concept of feminisation of poverty is not only a consequence of lack of income, but is also the result of the deprivation of capabilities and gender biases present in both societies and governments (Chant 2006). The rise in female poverty is attributed to many factors such as population growth, the emigration of men, increasing family break-up, low productivity, a deteriorating environment, and structural adjustment policies (Moghadam 2005:4-5). As you will be able to understand by now, most of these are closely associated with globalisation processes.

Since impoverishment of women and children is closely associated with the striking increase in single-parent female-headed households, focus on such households is critical to addressing the problem of feminisation of poverty. Such households are at the highest risk of poverty for women due to lack of income and resources (Sara and Pramila 2007). According to a case study in Zimbabwe, households headed by widows have an income of approximately half that of male-headed households, and female-headed households have about three quarters of the income of male headed households (Brenner 1987).

There is a continuing increase in the number of female-headed households in the world. The main factors responsible for this increase in rural area are the rise in male out-migration, occurrences of illnesses and deaths of husbands. It is stated that 30-35 per cent of all rural households in India, for example, are female-headed households compared to 25 percent in Cambodia, 21.4 per cent in Mongolia and 15.7 per cent in Korea (Ng 2000).

It is also important to note that female-headed households are very common among urban poor as well, in both developed and developing countries. Moore (1988:63-4) states that a common feature of urban life is that many women are choosing not to marry and a significant number of married women are choosing to live separately from their husbands. Discussing the case of the US, Peterson (1987:334) mentions that “women are increasingly likely to carry the primary responsibility for supporting themselves because of rising divorce rates and non-marital childbearing. At the same time, many women remain locked into dead-end jobs with wages too low to support themselves and their families. Child-care responsibilities and lack of affordable child-care prohibit many women from participating in the labor market at all.”

Skalli (2001:80-4) discusses the case of feminisation of poverty and female-headed households in Morocco in the context of structural adjustment policies. In Morocco, female-headed households are increasing in the urban and rural areas. A major proportion of such households are headed by widows or divorcees, where widows tend to be more vulnerable than divorcees, due to their advanced age. These women are generally employed in the low-paying jobs, mainly in the
manufacturing industry. However, it is specifically the informal sector that employs these women, where they are engaged in little income-generating activities like needlework, sewing and knitting, from home. Work in non-formal sector exposes women to a number of constraints and prejudices, because of the absence of labour laws, social security regulations, as well as social welfare benefits. In Morocco, restructuring of the economy has resulted in the disengagement of the state from and reduction in its investments in the social services sector (health and education services). Cuts in public expenditure, and cancellation of subsidies on essential goods, worsened women’s vulnerability and their exploitation. In particular, women’s chances of securing employment in the formal sector decreased. This implied, an increased pressure to work in the informal sector at all ages, for longer hours, minimal wages, and a greater urgency to migrate within and outside the country in search of cash-earning activities some of which can be risky for their physical, mental, and psychological health. On the other hand, economic recession and restructuring, as well as socio-economic, demographic and cultural changes have also led to the breakdown of the traditional family support network. For women in low-income households, in both rural and urban settings, this directly translates into the burden of combining unpaid domestic labour with low-income, labour-intensive activities in the informal sector.

Situations very similar to this one exist in other developing countries. Another issue closely related to poverty and female-headed households are the feminisation of subsistence agriculture. As you know, globalisation has triggered industrialisation all over the world and one of the major consequences of this has been the increase in the production of cash crops. Moore (1988) states that commercialisation of agriculture has led to women in rural areas taking up the major responsibility for growing of subsistence crops. In Africa, commercialisation of agriculture forced women into working longer hours in the subsistence sector, in order to provide for the family, while men became involved in cash-cropping. Also, as industrialisation opened up job opportunities in urban areas, there was increased migration of men from rural to urban areas, which further heightened the responsibility of women to manage subsistence farming.

In the case of Ghana (Africa), Bukh (1979, in Moore 1988:76) describes that during the boom in cocoa production men took over the job of producing cocoa, while women took on responsibility for cultivating the basic food for the household. When the price of cocoa fell in the 1970s, many men migrated to look for work, leaving the women and children behind on the farm. Many women found it difficult to cover their household and personal expenses, so they supplemented their incomes by combining farming with petty trading, wage labour, craft work and food processing. As evident, this increased the workload of women enormously.

While, similar situations are found in other communities in Africa, Moore (1988: 77-8) says that we should be cautious about setting up a straightforward equation between women and subsistence agriculture, and men and cash crops. There are plenty of examples of women growing cash crops, working as wage labourers and engaging in a wide variety of other market-oriented activities. And the overall effect of the commercialisation of agriculture has frequently been the impoverishment of the peasant agricultural sector as a whole, rather than a simple gain for men.
2.2.2 Women, Work and Globalisation

So, as we have seen in the last section, closely linked to the feminisation of poverty is the changing nature of women’s work. Studies in this field have been dominated by the growing phenomenon of women’s participation in non-agricultural employment. In this section we will study the issue of feminisation of work in the context of export-oriented manufacturing in developing countries.

Changes in occupational structure, and in the overall organisation of an individual country’s economy are directly determined by the part the country’s economy plays in the international arena. The level of industrialisation of a country is one of the major determinants of women’s participation in non-agricultural employment. Industrialisation alters patterns of work, it changes the relationship between the workplace and the home, and it reorganises the distribution of employment opportunities within the different sectors of the economy, by creating new forms of employment and destroying others (Moore 1988:97-99).

The rapid increase in the number of women engaged in non-agricultural employment in developing countries has not occurred uniformly in all regions. Also, the increase has not taken place in the same sectors of employment. While some women have gone into the industrial labour force, most have gone into light industrial manufacturing. In some countries, a significant proportion of women have gone into the tertiary sector of employment, where they are employed in personal services and government occupations, as well as in professions.

Let us discuss the case of light industrial manufacturing in detail.

World Market Factories / Export Processing Zones

Global capitalist development has led to the emergence of world-market factories in many parts of the developing world, particularly in Asia and Latin America. These world-market factories produce goods exclusively for export to the rich developed countries of the world. The companies that run these factories may be owned by local capitalists or they may be subsidiaries of large multinationals. In either case, their choice of location is determined by cheap and compliant labour, the advantages of tax concessions and by conveniently inadequate regulations governing health and safety provisions. World-market factories produce textiles, soft toys, sports equipment and ready-to-wear clothes, electrical goods and components for the electronics industry. In many instances, these factories play a very limited role in the manufacture of the product, which means that they are little more than a stage in a production process controlled by multinationals (Moore 1988:100).

The most interesting aspect of these world-market factories is that the vast majority (over 80 per cent) of the workers who are employed in them are young women between the ages of 13 and 25 years. These women, of course, are the assembly-

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6 Many developing countries have demarcated Export Processing Zones (EPZs) for such activity. The idea of EPZ is essentially to provide special incentives to exporters and to allow them to avoid or bypass many of the laws and physical and material constraints, which supposedly inhibit export growth in the rest of the economy. The significance of the Export Processing Zones lies essentially in its physical, social and economic separation from the rest of the country (Ghosh 2002:47).

7 Education is thought to have a positive effect on women’s participation in the labour force because it improves employment opportunities for women, it encourages greater female mobility in search of employment, it is assumed to increase the aspirations and expectations of women workers, and it is supposed to weaken the barriers of cultural tradition which prevent women from entering the labour market (Moore 1988:103).
line operatives; the administrative and technical posts, which are far fewer in number, are occupied by men. A number of studies report that the preference for employing women by these companies is due to women’s apparently innate capacities for the work, their docility, their disinclination to unionise, and the fact that women are cheap because, while men need an income to support a family, women do not (ibid:100-101). This shows that the gender biases inherent in social life are strategically used in employment of women, for the production of cheaper goods.

**Impact of Wage Labour on Women’s Lives**

Many researchers have studied the impacts of such employment on the lives of women. It is interesting to note that these studies do not uniformly talk of the disadvantages and exploitation of women in such forms of employment. Many studies point to the benefits that some women in developing countries have gained from these employment opportunities (for e.g. Swantz 1995; Sen 1996; Joekes 1997). Studies on Caribbean region show that paid work is desirable because it provides women greater independence from men and their families. Among older married women in Puerto Rico, it was found that long-term employment in industrial production leads to a greater sense of self-worth, and greater class consciousness (Safa 1990). In addition, several studies of Latin American countries contend that when women enter the labor force, more equitable patterns of resource sharing and decision-making within the household unit occur (Meyer 2006:88).

Ganguly-Sarcase (2003) also states that globalising processes of market liberalisation and SAPs may not necessarily have a negative impact on women. While new forms of inequality do result from economic reforms, there may be other opportunities for greater independence in certain societies, like the lower middle-class women in West Bengal, India. Other researchers like Omvedt (1997 in Ganguly-Sar case 2003) have stated that in light of democratisation in gender relations within the Indian family, the effects of structural adjustment on women have not been as much of a burden as its opponents claim. Feldman’s study (1992 in ibid.) of women workers in export-processing enclaves in Bangladesh, shows that women from rural middle-strata families were able to increase their employment opportunities, thus challenging the traditional prohibitions on female mobility that were shaped by Bengali culture and a variant of Islamic doctrine.

Salaff (1981) in her study of working women of Hong Kong, shows that in the low-wage economy of Hong Kong, each family depends on the wages of several family members in order to survive, and daughters’ wages are increasingly crucial part of family income. While there are several advantages of the working daughter to the family, these women also see their employment as beneficial, as it opens up a number of opportunities for them. Most marriages are no longer arranged and women tend to meet their potential spouses through peer group activities. Women save part of their earnings to buy household goods for their marital homes, and to make contributions to their dowries. Working daughters keep a small and regular amount for themselves from their earnings to use for personal effects and leisure activities. In this sense wage-labour makes leisure time activities with peers financially possible. In recognition of the money they put into the family, working daughters are usually exempt from household tasks such as cooking, child care and laundry. Working daughters are also given more
Apart from improving women’s position within home and providing greater independence, there are some other positive outcomes of women’s employment. Research indicates that women’s access to economic resources in the form of paid employment reduces their dependence on children for social status and economic security, thereby reducing levels of fertility. Relatedly, paid work has been found to positively influence women’s own health as well as that of their children (Meyer 2006:88).\(^8\)

However, there are several scholars who adhere to the ‘female marginalisation’ hypothesis. These researchers contend that the studies discussed above are overly optimistic in regard to women’s gains from employment. In today’s world while information and communication technology has become a potent force for transforming social, economic, and political life in the globalised world, the gendered division of labor is already emerging. A large number of women tend to be concentrated in the end-user, lower skilled jobs and comprise a very small number among managerial, maintenance, and design personnel (Pande, 2006:7). According to Papps (1992), development has led to the displacement of women from traditional subsistence activities and restricted employment opportunities. Moreover, in many cultures, deeply held social traditions (such as housework as women’s duty) have not changed as a result of women becoming breadwinners in the household. For those women who have found employment in the modern sector, they often face continuing gender exploitation in the form of hazardous working conditions, marginalisation into low paying jobs, barriers to promotion, and unequal pay (Meyer 2006: 89). This is also reflected in the examples that we discussed in the section on female-headed households.

Both these kinds of studies illustrate the multi-faceted process of economic globalisation. While women may experience increased independence and power within the household when they enter the labour force, the conditions under which they gain employment and how they participate in the economy are crucial determinants of whether or not they improve their economic and social status (ibid).

### 2.3 GENDER INCLUSIVE GLOBALISATION

With an understanding of the gender-differentiated impacts of globalisation, we now come to the issue of gender-inclusive globalisation. Ever since the concerns of negative impacts of globalisation processes have been raised by social scientists and feminist researchers, there have been discussions and efforts in the direction of making globalisation policies and processes gender-inclusive. Let us understand what this means.

As we know, globalisation is deemed beneficial to a country because it is supposed to lead to economic growth, resulting from a better allocation of resources in the world economy, exchange of knowledge, transfer of technologies and a

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\(^8\) Miles and Brewster (1998 in Meyer 2006:88) find that in the Philippines, female wage workers in white-collar jobs and self-employment are significantly more likely than those not employed to have obtained prenatal care and substantially more likely to have adopted a contraceptive method in the year following childbirth.
consequent increase in productivity, as well as the development of human and physical capital. With the expansion of domestic production, income opportunities as a whole generally increase, benefitting a large number of people (UN 2008). However, as we have seen in the last section, within the context of globalisation, women can be the winners or losers. Their multiple responsibilities and gender-related constraints, such as a lack of access to productive inputs and resources, can mean that they are not able to seize the opportunities provided by trade expansion to the same degree as men. Moreover, the opportunities provided to men may have negative consequences for women and they may even lose their livelihoods as a result of import competition. In order to promote a mutually supportive (high growth, low gender inequality) scenario, it is well-understood now that women’s multiple roles, responsibilities and limitations need to be taken into account in globalisation policies and programmes (UN 2008).

The growing understanding on this issue has led to the emergence of the concept of gender mainstreaming. In July 1997, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) defined the concept of gender mainstreaming as “the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in any area and at all levels. It is a strategy for making the concerns and experiences of women as well as of men an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres, so that women and men benefit equally, and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal of mainstreaming is to achieve gender equality.”

Thus, gender mainstreaming is not only about adding a woman’s component into an existing activity. Gender sensitivity must be integral to all planning and implementation processes. Some of the ways for ensuring gender mainstreaming include the gender mainstreaming plan of sectoral policies; targeted interventions by the state to reduce gender inequalities, equal participation of women (especially at decision-making levels of sectoral policies), and monitoring by women’s organisations (UN 2008).

Let us take the case of gender mainstreaming in sectoral policies. In developing countries, every sector needs policies, which would increase employment opportunities for women in the unorganised sector because majority of poor unskilled women can primarily be occupied in this sector. Jhabvala and Sinha (2002) mentions that in India, forestry is a sector where women’s employment can be increased manifold. They suggest that reforestation programmes of nursery growing, plantations and tending of plants, as also collection, processing and sale of minor forest produce, can be handed over to women’s groups. One calculation has shown that if nursery growing for the forest department in Gujarat (west India) could be done through women’s groups, it would increase employment among one lakh women, for six months.

In the health sector, policies which would link informal health providers, especially midwives, with the formal health system, would increase both employment and earnings of the health providers. Increasing micro-finance schemes would increase employment opportunities through livelihood

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10 Ibid.
Another important way of gender mainstreaming is gender-budgeting. Since the mid-1980s, a variety of gender-budget initiatives have been undertaken with the purpose of rendering public budgets gender-equitable. It has been seen that in public spending and methods of raising revenue, there are inherent gender biases, and many of these biases appear to be commonly exacerbated by market liberalisation policies (Çağatay and Ertürk 2004:16). The budget is an important tool in the hands of state for affirmative action for improvement of gender relations through reduction of gender gap in the development process. It can help to reduce economic inequalities, between men and women as well as between the rich and the poor. As we have discussed previously, reductions in social programmes (such as health and education), due to structural adjustment policies, have been disproportionately harmful for women and girls. Since social programmes have a direct bearing on human capabilities, women have become more vulnerable due to these reductions. Gender-budget initiatives can ensure public provisioning of social programmes, and potentially reduce women’s vulnerabilities. A positive example from Indonesia in this direction is that, during the Asian economic crisis of the late 1990s, which caused loss of employment among women in both formal and informal sectors, efforts were made in Indonesia to keep poor children, especially girl children, in school through scholarships, half of which were allocated to girls (ibid:18).

Women’s participation, at the level of decision-making, planning and implementation of development programmes, is also central to ensuring gender mainstreaming. This involves seeking out grassroots women’s organisation and NGOs – from small groups of producers and networks of small and medium-sized entrepreneurs, to gender activists and academics concerned with trade and development. Consultation and inclusion of this segment of civil society as key stakeholders is a necessary step towards ensuring the effective participation of women (UN 2008).

2.4 SUMMARY

In this unit on Globalisation and Gender, you have seen the complex relationship between gender inequalities and the economic liberalisation policies that underpin globalisation processes. On the one hand, globalisation has provided numerous jobs for people in developing countries, led to improved standards of living due to greater access to products and services at lower prices, and enhanced transfer of technology for human benefit. On the other hand benefits of globalisation have not been uniformly distributed, leading to the widening of gap between the rich and the poor. In many cases, the condition of unskilled and asset-poor people has worsened due to the impact of globalisation. Women have also been both positively and negatively impacted. In some societies, existing gender biases in patriarchal societies have been aggravated, whereas in others, women have been able to challenge the traditional social norms due to improved employment opportunities. In any cases, however, female marginalisation as a result of globalisation cannot be denied. Not only has globalisation led to an increased incidence of poverty among women, it has also made them more vulnerable due
to declining state support programme and greater informalisation of female employment.

The only way to minimise the negative impacts of globalisation is to make the process of development planning and implementation, both at national and international level, more gender sensitive. Many developing countries and governments may lack the resources and mechanisms to protect those who have lost livelihoods in the context of globalisation. However, gender mainstreaming in the spheres of policy-making can be undertaken meaningfully. There is a shift in the current policy stance towards people-centred and gender-wise policies. Gender mainstreaming is now an important agenda in all development initiatives at international and national levels. Concerted efforts in this direction will lead to equitable and just development.

References


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**Suggested Reading**


**Sample Questions**


2) Briefly discuss the processes of globalisation and some of its positive and negative impacts.

3) Discuss the impact of wage labour on women’s lives.

4) What do you understand by gender mainstreaming? Why is it important?