

# The effects of globalisation on women



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Although the term ‘ globalisation’ was only known to me from items on TV and in newspapers, I have tried to make a thorough analysis in this paper for my English course. I am not an economist, so the subject was rather new to me. In the different media, globalisation is usually dealt covered from an anti-globalisation angle. This raises the first very important question: is globalisation all negative or does a global economy also have merits?

Unfortunately, because the subject is so extensive I have to narrow it down. I therefore choose to describe the participation of women in the process of globalisation.

The paper is constructed around the following themes:

â- ☒ What is globalisation?

â- ☒ How does globalisation affect women? An introduction

â- ☒ Participation of women in the economy

- Effects of export, economic foundation

- The Infant Industry Argument

â- ☒ Women’s representation in the political process

â- ☒ Women and education

â- ☒ Women and health

â- ☒ Modern Day Slavery

â- ☒ Violence against women

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â- ☒ The rise of NGO's

â- ☒ An interview with an Usbek girl

â- ☒ Conclusion

â- ☒ What is globalisation?

' Being spread all over the world', that would be the literal definition of globalisation. With the means of modern technology and communication, used all over the world these days, we know almost immediately what is happening on the other side of the world. We get more connected with each other and, as a consequence, we become evermore dependant on one another. Our world has increasingly become a unity, because globalisation establishes itself on a political, economic, social and cultural level and these four groups are related.

The term ' globalisation' is not new, some say that the process started in the 15th century when the Europeans – or more specific the Portuguese and Spanish – wanted to expand and travelled oversees, thus conquering the South and Middle-American continent. Also bear in mind the battle between the English, French and Belgians over Africa.

Other sources state that globalisation began in the early eighties thanks to new information technologies such as the Internet.

As a result of this globalisation, the economies of different countries met and were forced to cooperate, necessitating the construction of one system so all economies could merge. In order to realise globalisation as we know it at

present it is critical that some companies and less powerful concerns are gradually replaced by big and powerful multinationals and big monetary companies.

But globalisation is a much bigger process than the mere increase of international trade and foreign investments. When we take a look at companies in Belgium, we notice a strong mobility of capital and workers.

Globalisation is a global realisation of a world economy; custom houses are no longer needed and therefore abolished, prices increase so the returns of companies grow bigger. We aim for as much privatisation as possible where companies part of the public sector are transferred to the private sector.

â- ☒ How does globalisation affect women? An introduction.

The United Nations watches over the rights of all people, including women. It estimates that over 58 million primary-school-aged girls worldwide are not enrolled in school, more than two-thirds of the world's births occur outside health facilities. Many countries, among which the United States of America have not signed or ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

It is not very difficult to see that the life of women has greatly improved since globalisation, particularly in third world countries where women had a lot of catching up to do.

Nevertheless, the development of women in areas of life such as education, health and civil rights is still very limited. According to the United States Agency for International Development and the World Bank, 55% (of a total of <https://assignbuster.com/the-effects-of-globalisation-on-women/>

72 million) of female primary-school-aged children do not attend school.

Furthermore, when they do receive the opportunity to get an education, it is less likely that they complete their primary school compared to boys.

International communities, such as the United Nations, use and monitor indicators of gender equality. In 2010 the United Nations wrote their 'UN's Millennium Development Goals' in which they verify gender equality and the empowerment of women. Some of the indicators of gender equality used by the United Nations are levels of female enrolment at school, participation in the workplace and representation in decision-making positions and political institutions.

Many international conferences have discussed the various and unique problems women have to face. The UN have created a new identity: United Nations Women. It controls gender equality and the implementation of laws regarding female rights.

â- Participation of women in the economy

Effect of export, economic foundation

A close inspection of a few economic principles reveals that a country benefits from trade with other countries. We can safely say that a country's welfare increases as soon as it becomes an exporting country. If the world price for a product is higher than the domestic price, a country will export its goods. By doing so, the total surplus increases. On the other hand, when the world price is lower than the domestic price, the country must import goods

to have an increase in total surplus. Either way, a country's welfare will always increase by setting up trade.

### The Infant Industry Argument

Many third world countries are convinced they should follow the theory described in economic literature as 'The Infant Industry Argument', stating that trade restrictions will help a developing industry to get started. These countries think that their industry will be able to compete with foreign competitors after a period of protection. However, there are many reasons why economists are sceptical about this protectionism.

First of all, these restrictions are difficult to put into practice. Some questions the government will be faced with are: 'which industry will be profitable?' and 'will the benefit of establishing these industries exceed the cost for consumers?'

Don't forget the problem of protection mostly going to those companies that are politically powerful. Also, it is very hard to remove this 'temporary' policy.

In addition, many economists are sceptical about the infant industry argument, even in principle. When the industry is unable to compete, but can prove profitable in the long run, the owners of the firms should be willing to incur losses. After a while, they can obtain possible profit.

So, by being an exporting country, a quicker economic growth is more likely and consequently, a country that wants to expand its economy, has to be able to put many people at work. In that hypothesis, women have to be part

of the working class. Closer inspection of different third world countries shows that women's employment varies greatly. In some countries in the Middle East participation of women in the local economy is the greatest of the world. In East-Asia 67 % of all women is working while the global average is 53%. On the other hand we find very few women being part of the working population in some Arab countries, for example only 15 % in Saudi-Arabia.

When we look at the reasons why there are so many and great differences in employment of women, we finally discover a difference in social-cultural factors. For example, many Maghreb countries believe that women cannot work. Likewise women are being tightly politically controlled in many Arabic countries, with laws describing what a woman should and should not do. Mostly, they have to stay at home and take care of the children and the household.

Having said that, women are obviously called upon to contribute to the family earnings by going out to work when the family grows and the household increases. Yet, on the other hand, she is the first to give up her career and stay home as soon as she has children.

This is not the only problem women face; in most countries, even in so-called developed ones, women are worse off than men. They earn less money for the same work and will not easily make it to decision-making jobs. More often than not women are to be found in such sectors as education and sanitation.

So, what is the effect of globalisation on these issues? We can see that globalisation improves women's economic achievements; they will be able to

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earn and control their income and as such, empower themselves to negotiate their role and status in their household as well as in society.

Countries must change their way on women because women are essential for the increase of the national economy. Employing only men will not be sufficient to reach that goal.

The gains for women who work are double: women's employment does not only increase the economy, it also appears to improve child survival rate, family health and to reduce fertility rates.

Unfortunately, the situation is not always positive. Even though a number of these countries are able to put women to work, the job is often dangerous or the working conditions are very bad. They even have to carry out jobs men turn down. Additionally, women have little rights concerning working hours, health care, privacy protection ...

These gender-related problems aren't restricted to underdeveloped countries, though. When looking at Europe, for instance, it is women who are most likely to be discharged in times of recession. Also, in most European countries, women still do not earn the same wages as men.

It is less likely to find a woman in an important job than a man. Mostly, the reason is that men have the positions to hire people and often they think that a man is a safer choice.

In some companies it is customary not to employ women in their fertile years, because of the cost of having to employ a substitute during the woman's maternity leave.



Organisations such as Human Rights Watch zealously battle for legal protection of women labourers. They also want to strengthen their legal protection and ensure easy access to legal resources. By doing so, they aim to increase participation in work as a positive development for women, when the law is on their side, men will give them the opportunity to work outside the household.

Still, every beginning is hard. Underlying factors have to be changed before serious progress can be made. As the United Nations stated: ' Women have entered the labour force in unprecedented numbers, increasing the potential for their ability to participate in economic decision making at various levels, starting with the household'.

#### â- ☒ Women's representation in the Political Process

Many international agreements discuss the goal of gender equality, yet many local governments lack female participation. Nevertheless, increased representation of women in decision making is crucial for the empowerment of women.

World conferences like the Beijing Fourth World Conference and the Millennium Development Goals recommend several programs for this purpose. However, when we investigate recent data we notice that the process is slow and the outcome around the world is very different.

Many organisations such as the Women Leaders Initiative, created by the World Economic Forum tried to up the participation of women in global economy, by increasing the representation of women leaders at global

summits. The target internationally agreed upon is a female representation of 30 %. In 2010, 26 countries, among which Belgium and the Netherlands, reached this target. Some governments pulled through by introducing quotas for women's political participation.

But increasing women's representation is not the only issue governments have to deal with. When women arrive in decision-making jobs by quota, they do not only have to be present, but they also have to be genuinely involved in the actual decision making process. Unfortunately, not all women are fully prepared for the job. In the new Bulgarian parliament, for example, women secured 26% of the votes (40% of the eligible positions were occupied by women as a result of campaigns by NGO's). But after the election a study showed that women were not fully prepared for their career. They apparently did not want to represent women's rights or interests. Currently, only 9 countries around the world have a female leader.

#### â- ☒ Women and education

Where education is concerned, research yields very different results in different places. In a number of African countries, women can't go to primary school, for instance. This situation is completely the opposite in some Asian countries where there are more women than men in secondary schools.

Generally speaking, girls in the poorest countries have the lowest chance of getting an education.

Yet school attendance is not the only issue we have to measure; illiteracy is an extremely important problem, seeing that 64% of all illiterate adults worldwide are women.

Illiteracy is one of the indicators used by the UN Millennium Development Goal to progress gender equality. The international community hopes, and I quote the Levin Institute, ' to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education in all levels of education no later than 2015'.

We know that education is very important, educated women stand a slimmer chance of living in poverty, hence alleviating poverty in general. Non-governmental organisations such as the UNESCO also state that female education has positive effects on child health and provides other members of the household the chance to educate themselves. Furthermore, women who have enjoyed an education participate more in the economy.

When looking at extremely poor countries which are mostly rural, women are not likely to complete any type of schooling. Yet, education is a basic human right and as such defined in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.

The World Education Forum hopes to see changes in attitudes, values and practices to end gender inequality.

The UNESCO noted that, especially in poor African countries, it is not the policy that holds women back. A Girl's education is not valued in many societies because women have to take care of the household. Therefore only boys can receive an education, because they have to learn skills to work outside the home.

In some countries it is very difficult to go to school because of the distance. Primary schools are usually near the home, but because secondary schools are at a considerable distance, they are often not attended because if they do attend the children have to leave home. Exposing girls to the outside world seems not important. Their place is at home, doing the household. The only knowledge they need for cooking and caring for others, they learn from their mothers and older sisters.

Another problem is that schools do not provide with adjusted sanitary facilities for girls. So governments have to fund schools to build lavatories for males and females.

In some countries, families are offered a small fee if they send their girls to school. To eliminate fraud, the salary will only be given to the family after the children have passed their exams. By doing so, parents are also affected in the process of change.

Globalisation provides the world with the opportunity to make changes. Global organisation can monitor all countries and set up rules so that women get the power they need. By giving them an education they are also given the opportunity to speak for themselves.

#### â- Women and health

Poor health is a problem numerous developing countries have to face. Reasons are limited services or access to them, lack of education and too little information about health issues. When looking at the situation of women, it is evident that they are also affected by other problems

concerning health. For example, mal nutrition, sexually transmitted diseases, pregnancy complications. Although in many cultures women are the first to take care of others who are in need, they are often the last to receive medical treatment themselves.

Organisations such as the World Bank try to educate women by teaching them how to protect themselves against sexually transmitted diseases like HIV. In some countries in Africa and Asia the contamination with HIV has taken the form of an epidemic among women. Studies show that women are twice as likely to be infected with contagious diseases than men, especially due to a lack of information and education. The reason that women are more affected is to be explained by gender inequality. Women are not in the position to refuse sex or to demand the use of a condom. By promoting gender equality, women's rights organisations try to improve the bad position of girls and women. Women have to be taught to speak up for themselves and control their own lives, they have to show resistance to the often very dominating males.

Educational programs developed by organisations such as the UNIFEM provide them with information about nutrition in order to have a healthier life. This is not only useful for the women themselves, but the whole household will benefit by it.

One of the most important issues non- governmental organisations have to deal with is maternal health, especially when realising that the majority of maternal deaths can be prevented. In many cultures the life of a woman is worth less than the time necessary to bring her to a health centre. Often the

family waits too long to seek medical help so that the woman dies before even getting to a hospital.

Only by giving women proper health care and information, the number of deaths during child birth can be reduced. Via special programs women are pointed out the dangers of breast feeding when the mother is HIV positive. Along with the information regarding the risks for the baby, the mothers are offered milk powder and bottles to feed the little ones.

Another very delicate problem is that of abortion. In many cultures pregnancy termination is prohibited and women have no rights to argue. Birth control methods are not used and in some religions even forbidden so that women are almost always pregnant. This way the pressure on the household is enormous, frequently with poverty as a result. Also women who have many children to look after have no time left to go out. They have nowhere for a little bit of privacy or tranquillity.

The issue of birth control brings us to another problem women in poor countries have to deal with. Because abortion is not debatable, some women seek refuge in unsafe abortions as last resort when they want to terminate a pregnancy without the family knowing.

These issues remain controversial, not only in third world countries but in all countries with religious societies such as Catholic and Muslim countries.

Nevertheless, scientific studies show a connection between poverty and the number of children a woman has. When the poverty of women decreases,

the fertility rate increases. Also, a woman who has less children to take care of is able to give these children a better education and development.

The Human Rights Commission identifies the practices most threatening to women as (I quote):

“ Female circumcision, known as female genital mutilation to its opponents, which involves the excision of a woman’s external sexual organs;

Other forms of mutilation, such as facial scarring;

Various nutritional taboos;

Traditional practices associated with childbirth;

The problem of dowries in some parts of the world;

Honor killing

The consequences of preference for male babies, such as parental neglect and infanticide of female babies.”

In some countries women have to face genital mutilation on religious grounds. That practice has been described by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as an insult to human rights. It shows a lack of dignity from the part of men and a lack of equality between men and women.

â- ☒ Modern Day slavery

Some women who lead a bad life in poverty believe they can find a better life in a developed country. They are sometimes exploited by organisations who trick them into forced labour or sexual exploitation.

Globalisation made it easier to move people around the world and people get in touch with organisations who promise a better life faster. Often they are taken to a developed country with the promise of a job as a nanny or housekeeper, but when they arrive they end up in prostitution. These women do not have the opportunity to react because they depend on the person who brought them there. The traffickers hold on to the necessary papers to keep these victims in the country. Seeing they cannot get in touch with the authorities, they are forced to live an illegal life.

We often see that especially women of lower class groups are vulnerable. Also the political and economic crisis in some countries contributes to the trafficking of women, as it turns out to be a very lucrative business.

When talking of human trafficking we are in fact dealing with international criminal organisations, meaning, highly mobile structures that are difficult to prosecute. In some countries we find members of the local government involved in this illegal business. Also, when a certain suspect is caught and brought to justice, it is very difficult to find witnesses or victims willing to testify against these traffickers. Because of the international character of the organisations, many people fear for their lives and those of their family members.

In some Asian countries children often end up in the sex industry. Non-governmental organisations try to inform the parents about the potential



dangers of illegal sex trade, the risks of HIV and the legal penalties involving the issue.

Not only non-governmental organisations take action, also some governments state it is illegal to travel for the purpose of sex tourism. By discouraging people to take part of the sex industry, the government can diminish the problems.

â- ☒ Violence against women (VAW)

NGO's provide for rules to combat VAW. In Egypt, for example, women who were treated violently can receive legal advice and counselling on the one hand and help with other issues such as divorce and housing on the other hand.

NGO's also control the implementation of laws and policies, which is a big challenge because some informants underreport or are biased (do not want to report family or friends). Another problem is the wrong interpretation of the laws. could you provide an example? It is not entirely clear as such

There is also bureaucracy; in some countries, even developed ones like the US, VAW programs are diffused across different political tendencies. The government does not want to take part for a determinate side. This is not clear

In poor countries in the developing world, there is not enough money to spend on programs to inform on violence against women. They often do not have the financial infrastructure to combat VAW.

Because of the intervention of NGO's, people have become aware of the problem and pressure coming from the community increases. However, when violent behaviour is met with punishment, support from the community is lacking. Abuse still occurs, but when all members of society are involved to fight the problem, the number of incidents of abuse will decrease.

#### â- ☒ The rise of NGO's

As a result of globalisation, various organisations defend the rights of women around the world. In the last 50 years, many non-governmental organisations defending women and women's rights were founded. They work on different themes such as education, medical aid, development and so forth. As a result of their work, we will now find great female political leaders, even in underdeveloped countries like Benin.

Those women inspire a lot of other women to educate themselves and fight for their equality.

#### â- ☒ An interview with an Usbek girl

Nastaya Buchok is an Usbek girl of 13 years old. She participated in a girls project that “ provides encouragement, support and training to select a group of young computer-orientated girls”, sponsored by the International Research and Exchanges Board.

This is what globalisation has done for her:

Globalisation has really affected her life and that of other women too. Thanks to the program she learned that women can also be leaders and can build a

future for themselves. When she has completed the program, she wants to cooperate with Youth Organisations. She says that technology can improve the status of women so they can become leaders in their community and be on the same level as men.

## â- Conclusion

While reading about the subject of globalisation I found many pros and contras. The study on which I based my paper, mostly talks about positive results of globalisation, where women are concerned. Globalisation provides them with the opportunity to get an education and offers them the chance to stand up for themselves. Many non-governmental organisations which are zealously fighting for women's rights have been founded as a result of globalisation.

In many underdeveloped countries women think that leading a life that is dominated by men is normal. They do not know what freedom means or that they have as many rights regarding education, health, politics and so on as men do. Now they are given a voice, the chance to develop. They get the opportunity to make a difference. By training, education, providing services and support the NGO's offer help to suppressed women. There are people who are lobbying with governments and international organisations for better policies.

The process of change is very slow, but every result, even a tiny one, can make a big difference later. Because women are the ones who educate the children, the results can be seen after one generation already. If we are able to give the women of today a proper education, they will see the importance

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of going to school and then they will send their children to school. By doing so their children do not have to struggle to get an education, it will be the normal thing to do.

If women are informed on how to build a healthy life, everyone in the family will benefit from it. Children have less chance to be undernourished and so less children will die. We can turn the tide so that mortality among children decreases.

When women know how to protect themselves against diseases like HIV, the number of

orphans will decrease as well as the number of children who are born with HIV or who will get contaminated by their mother because she is ignorant of the consequences of breastfeeding a child while being HIV positive.

Working women have their own income, which will make them less dependent of their husbands. It also gives them a chance to build up a social network outside the home and away from the influence of the family. In every way, being in contact with other partners in adversity, they can widen their horizon. However, going outside is not self-evident for women in many societies and some religions speak negatively of women who are working.

If a woman can secure a job in politics, they can fight the battle for their female population, because not every woman has the ability or the nerve to stand up for her rights. So, having strong women in politics who speak up and fight their battles for women's rights zealously, all women's situation can improve. In order to get more women to occupy important political

mandates, NGO's set quota for the countries. As a result of this positive discrimination some countries already succeeded in having one-third of female politicians.

A lot of woman are oppressed by their husband or his family. When we have politicians who know the problems women have to face and want to defend women's rights, laws can be made to help the weaker ones. The UN offers guidelines to countries to develop themselves and set rules to prevent atrocities like human mutilation.

In the last paragraph I have given my personal conclusion on the subject 'globalisation and women'. But I must admit that globalisation is a much more complex matter. I did not speak about the economic, environmental and cultural aspects of it. When I discussed the effect of globalisation on women, it all seemed positive. But the fact that we can travel all over the world in only 24 hours and that we in Belgium, for example, know that there has been an earthquake in Japan within a second also has negative consequences.

Through globalisation many local cultures disappear and a new, multicultural society comes into existence.

Because there is no break (what do you mean by this?) on economic globalisation, some natural sources are overexploited. In the early days, people only took what their society needed, now big companies reclaim without thinking of the consequences for the environment or without looking at the future. The only thing of importance is profit.

Also, big companies grind down the population by putting people at work for starvation wages. They often are not averse to child labour.

Another disadvantage of companies going abroad for the production of goods is that people in the 'rich' countries are unemployed because factories are closing.

When we put all the pros and cons together, globalisation is in many ways a blessing, especially in third world countries and for people who are discriminated or suffer disadvantages. Both men's and women's lives have improved and will continue to do so.

Also it is thanks to globalisation that organisations like the United Nations, Unicef the WHO and other non-governmental organisations have been founded and that, as a consequence, the rights of the weak participants in all societies are defended. Those organisations take a look at the whole picture and every individual in it. NGOs watch that the Human Rights are being observed and take action if they are violated.