

Gender Series

1

Globalization and  
its Impacts on  
Indigenous Women:  
The Philippine  
Experience

Victoria Tauli-Corpuz

TWN

Third World Network

**GLOBALIZATION AND ITS IMPACT ON  
INDIGENOUS WOMEN:  
THE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE**

By

**Victoria Tauli-Corpuz**

**TWN**  
Third World Network

*Globalization and its Impacts on Indigenous Women:  
The Philippine Experience*

is published by  
Third World Network  
228 Macalister Road  
10400 Penang, Malaysia

copyright © Third World Network 2001

Printed by Jutaprint  
2 Solok Sungei Pinang 3, Sg. Pinang  
11600 Penang, Malaysia.

ISBN: 983-9747-63-0

# CONTENTS

---

## Chapter

<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. The Gap Between Rhetoric and Reality</b>	<b>3</b>
The Philippine example	4
Mexican situation	5
Colombia	6
<b>3. The Face of Globalization in the Philippines</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>4. Feminization and Flexibilization of Labor in Industry and Services</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>5. The Liberalization of Agriculture</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>6. Impacts on Indigenous Women</b>	<b>19</b>
i) Inability to compete with imported crops	19
ii) The erosion of control over genetic resources and indigenous knowledge	21
iii) Undermining of the rights of indigenous women to their ancestral lands and to self-determination in agricultural programs	23
iv) Threatened food security	26
v) Increasing health hazards for indigenous women and the further degradation of the environment	30
vi) Destruction of indigenous economies and increased outmigration	33
vii) Increasing economic security among indigenous women	36

viii) Erosion of small-scale home-based handicraft industries run by indigenous women	38
ix) Worsening poverty	38
x) Increasing incidents of sexual abuse and violence against women	39
xi) Heavier unpaid women's reproductive work	41
xii) Increasing social problems and family problems	41
<b>7. Dilemmas in Handling the Globalization Agenda</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>44</b>

## Chapter 1

# Introduction

**T**he new wave of globalization, which is aggressively invading even the most remote villages in the world, is having disastrous impacts on indigenous peoples. Globalization as we are witnessing today is still the continuation of colonization with the use of more sophisticated methods. In the early days of colonization the gun-boat and the superior military technology of the colonizers were the main weapons used. Now, the international financing institutes like the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and multilateral trading bodies like the World Trade Organization (WTO), North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), etc. are the main instruments used.

There are those who say that globalization is positive because there is more access to information and indigenous peoples can communicate faster with each other. What is happening even in the most remote villages of indigenous people can be known worldwide because of the Internet. Others claim that for women globalization is also good because jobs are created in the industrial enclaves and women do get hired. Industries like garments and electronics employ more women than men. Some say that since globalization is inevitable there is no point in fighting it. We should just focus on building safety nets to absorb its negative impacts. The main economic objective of globalization is the removal of national barriers to trade and investments. This will allow foreign corporations and investors to enter freely and establish wherever they want, bring in capital goods without being taxed, freely trade their

products, and bring out their profits with no restrictions. National laws should be harmonized to adhere to WTO standards and to IMF-WB prescriptions.

For debt-ridden countries under the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) of the World Bank and the IMF the basic prescriptions of liberalization, deregulation, and privatization are not new. What is new is the more aggressive push to implement these further and the broadening of areas covered. Outside of the trade in manufactured goods, the sectors which are being liberalized and deregulated now include services, agriculture, intellectual property rights, investments, competition policies, and even government procurement.

Another difference is the legally-binding nature of the WTO agreements. If you are a signatory and you are not implementing the agreements and commitments you made, you can be sued at the WTO dispute settlement body. If it is proven that you are guilty, cross-retaliation\* (see page 44) can be employed against you.

The parties involved in all these transactions are nation-states. Indigenous nations and peoples were never consulted when the governments of the countries they belong to signed on to the Final Draft of the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which is now referred to as the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreements.

This paper will look into the face of globalization in the Philippines and show the actual and potential impacts on indigenous women.

## Chapter 2

### The gap between rhetoric and reality

**T**he form of globalization confronting us today is recolonization done in a more subtle but comprehensive manner. Therefore, the impacts are extensions of what took place during colonization. After colonization the exploitation of ancestral lands and resources did not stop. The local elites, who are usually from dominant population and which the colonizers cultivated, became the exploiters. The government was made a vehicle by these elites, in complicity with foreign business interests, to violate indigenous peoples' rights. Laws were passed to legitimize the appropriation of lands and resources. This is why to many indigenous peoples in the world the government and corporations are two sides of the same coin.

Since the late 1960s and up to the present, indigenous peoples' movements grew and became visible not only in the national arena but also within the United Nations. The most blatant violations committed against indigenous peoples were documented and brought to the world's attention. The Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples was finalized in 1993. Subsequently, the International Decade for the World's Indigenous Peoples was declared.

With these developments, it became fashionable for governments to claim that they are taking care of their indigenous peoples. The number of governments who now have national legislations on indigenous peoples' rights has increased. However, there is a big gap between rhetoric and reality. With globalization, even these few existing legislations are endangered. They are effectively ren-



dered toothless and meaningless by laws or policies favoring liberalization.

## The Philippine Example

The Philippine situation is a classic example. Due to the organized lobby of indigenous peoples, the 1987 Philippine Constitution finally included three sections under two articles which recognize the rights of indigenous peoples to their ancestral domain, self-governance and cultural integrity. However, it took ten years before the government passed an enabling act to operationalize the constitutional provision. This is the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Act (IPRA), which was passed in October 1997.

Within this ten years, however, the 12 million hectares which was the approximate area considered to be ancestral domain has been reduced to 3 million.<sup>1</sup> Most of the lands are taken over by government or leased by government to private corporations.

Even before this act was passed many laws which make a mockery of it have already been enacted. The Philippine Mining Act (Republic Act 7942) which was passed like a breeze in 1995 is just one example. This Mining Act allows for mining corporations with 100% foreign equity to have a lease on mineral lands up to an area of 81,000 hectares for as long as fifty years. These companies can repatriate fully their profits and are given tax-holidays for a period of 10 years. Aside from the Mining Act there are other laws which were passed, amended, or repealed to concur with the commitments of the government to the WTO. Some of these laws will be cited in the subsequent sections.

---

1 de Guzman, Vicenta and Tadeo Culia, "The Indigenous Filipinos' Legislative Agenda", *Indigenous Affairs*, No.2 - April/May/June 1997, IWGIA, Copenhagen, Denmark, p.43

The Philippine Mining Act of 1995 remains the biggest threat to the eventual dislocation of indigenous peoples from their ancestral territories. Even with the passage of IPRA, indigenous peoples do not have a reason to be complacent that their ancestral land rights are secured. IPRA clearly exempts mineral lands from the coverage of certificate of ancestral domain titles (CADT). At best these lands will be reclassified. However, the process of reclassification is so complicated.

What is being offered by the Mining Act and the IPRA is the prior informed consent of the indigenous peoples who will be directly affected. However, it still remains to be seen how this process is going to be undertaken

## **Mexican Situation**

Other countries have similar stories. Article 27 of the 1917 Mexican Constitution which created the *ejido*, the community-based system of land tenure in which the government protected privately held parcels and communal lands within the community from the market was amended to allow these lands to become alienable and disposable. Aside from allowing outsiders to buy the lands, the revision also allows for the seizure of these *ejidos* if the owners fall into debt.<sup>2</sup>

This was done by the Mexican government under Carlos Salinas to comply with the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) which considers such constitutional provisions as barriers to free trade. The rights of foreign corporations to invest and exploit indigenous peoples lands and resources are given precedence by multilateral and regional trade agreements. This development

---

2 Miller, Brad, "Mexico's Hired Guns", *Abya Yala News*, Vol. 10, No. 3, Summer 1997, South Meso American Indian Rights Center (SAIIC), San Francisco, USA, p. 28

spurred the uprising of the Zapatistas in January 1, 1994 in Chiapas, Mexico.

Mexico is one of the few countries that have signed and ratified ILO Convention 169 (Convention Concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries). However, the government wants to become a major player in the global market economy. The government's adherence to trade agreements like NAFTA, WTO, and the IMF-WB programs leads to the blatant violation of whatever instruments or declarations it signed which promoted indigenous peoples' interests.

If indigenous peoples become obstacles to achieving this goal, then they have to be dealt with harshly. This is seen in the recent massacre of 45 Mayan people (21 women, 15 children and 5 men) in Acteal, Chenalho, on December 22, 1997 by the police. The resistance of the Mayan Indians of Chiapas is met with increasing terror and violence by the Mexican National Army, and the private armies and hired goons of the landlords and cattle barons.

The acknowledgement of the role of indigenous peoples in sustainable development is increasing as seen in Agenda 21 and other international declarations and agreements. With this development coupled with pressures by indigenous peoples, some governments made policies or laws that require prior consultation with indigenous peoples before development projects or corporations enter their communities. The rate at which these policies are violated, however, far outpace their implementation.

## **Colombia**

In Colombia, after a sustained protest by 82 indigenous peoples communities in Bogota, the government passed Decree 1397 in August 1996. This Decree established that before any project is

started in indigenous peoples' lands mandatory consultations should be done. The mining and oil corporations hit back and complained that this Decree will inhibit foreign investors from coming into the country. Colombia's largest source of foreign revenue is in oil exploration.

The U'wa people, who number only 8,000 and who are the ones directly affected by the oil exploration of Occidental Petroleum, threatened to commit mass suicide if the exploration takes place.<sup>3</sup> The Supreme Court released a ruling on February 2, 1997, which said that the government was given 30 days to consult with the U'wa. The government retains the right, however, to decide whether to allow Occidental Petroleum to explore or not. Colombia also ratified ILO Convention 169.

We see in these cases that being a signatory to a legal instrument or having national laws promoting indigenous peoples' rights is not a guarantee for the protection of these rights. This is becoming more the situation with globalization where the capacity of nation-states to regulate the market is considerably undermined. We have seen time and again how governments which get caught between indigenous peoples and corporations would go for protecting corporate rights.

---

3 *Abya Yala News* (1997), "Ambiguous Ruling in Colombia: U'wa Struggle to Stop Oil Concession Continues", SAILC, San Francisco, USA, p.30

## Chapter 3

# The face of globalization in the Philippines

**T**he colonization of the Philippines by Spain, the United States, and Japan led to its integration into the global market economy. Even after it gained political independence in 1945 from the United States, the colonial master ensured that its economy is still under its control. The country remained a cog in the wheel of the global market economy. It is a supplier of cheap raw materials and labor-intensive manufactures and a market and dumping ground for the expensive and sometimes hazardous products and technologies from the North. It is also a source of cheap labor, and a tax-haven for foreign investments.

During the Marcos dictatorship, the Philippines became heavily debt-ridden. In 1968, three years after Marcos gained power, the foreign debt was \$599 million. By 1970, after he spent \$50 to \$100 million for his re-election, the foreign debt went up to \$2 billion. By 1983 this debt surged up to \$24.6 billion. The Philippine government had to devalue the peso twice and declared a moratorium on debt payment.<sup>4</sup> When Marcos was finally ousted in 1986, the foreign debt he left was almost \$26 billion. Since the Philippines got caught in the debt-trap, the country had to adopt the Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) of the IMF-WB before it could avail of subsequent loans.

---

4 Santos, Aida (1989), "The Debt Crisis, The Treadmill of Poverty for Filipino Women", Kalayaan, Manila, Philippines, p.9

The standard SAP conditionalities include the following:<sup>5</sup>

- privatization of government-owned corporations
- austerity in government-spending which means freeze in hiring and raising of wages, cutting down subsidies for electricity, water, and reduction in public spending on education, health and social welfare services
- “liberalization of import procedures, tariff reforms, strengthening of fiscal incentives for exporters, and administrative actions to promote and facilitate exports..” (World Bank, Draft of Structural Adjustment Loan Agreement”, July 14, 1980), and
- devaluation of the currency to make exports cheaper and more competitive.

Legislations which allow further liberalization had to be pushed. An important legislation which ushered the entry of a significant number of foreign firms is the Republic Act 5490 of 1969, which provided for the creation of a Foreign Free Trade Zone Authority otherwise known as the Export Processing Zone Authority (EPZA). The incentives offered to the foreign investors are as follows:

- 100% foreign ownership
- the waiver of minimum registered investment
- no duties, taxes, or license fees
- priority in foreign exchange allocations
- speedy administrative procedures
- right to borrow money within the Philippines with government guarantees
- unrestricted repatriation of profits
- strict clampdowns on unionization and collective wage bargaining

---

5 Ofreneo, Rosalinda Pineda (1997), Globalization: From History to Herstory, paper presented for the Roundtable Discussion on “Globalization: From History to Herstory”, Women and Development Program, College of Social Work and Community Development, University of the Philippines, Quezon City, Philippines, p. 9

Four main EPZs were set up in the whole country; Mariveles, Bataan; Mactan, Cebu; Silang, Cavite; and in Baguio City. In 1995 there were 200 firms located in these EPZs. Majority of these are garments and electronics firms. Many indigenous women from the Cordillera region got employed in the Baguio City Export Processing Zone (BCEPZ).

The Aquino and Ramos governments did not veer away from the export-oriented economic thrust of the Marcos dictatorship. In fact the 100% foreign equity allowed under Marcos was further expanded to include export-oriented manufacturing firms – meaning, those which export more than 70% of their output.

The Omnibus Investment Code of 1987 (Executive Order No. 226) increased the incentives for foreign investors. Some of the fiscal and non-fiscal incentives include an income tax holiday of six years for new pioneer firms and four years for non-pioneer firms. Tax and duty-free importation of capital equipment, machinery and accompanying spare parts within five years from effectivity of the Code. Tax credits on domestic capital equipment and for taxes and duties on raw materials, supplies and semi-manufactured products. Foreign nationals in supervisory, technical and advisory positions are allowed to work and exempted from personal income obligations.

The Medium Term Philippine Development Plan (MTPDP) for 1993-1998 otherwise known as Philippines 2000 was formulated to continue the programs started by Cory Aquino. It is a master plan which seeks to reinforce further the economy which is export-oriented, import-dependent, and debt-driven. This practically opens up the whole country to foreign investments not only in mining, but also in agriculture, services and other strategic and non-strategic areas.

The MTPDP is yet another manifestation of the Philippine government's docile adherence to the structural adjustment programs (SAPs). The slogan for Philippines 2000 is global competitiveness.

This means the country has to develop its capacity to compete in the global market even at the expense of addressing domestic needs. It pushed for a new round of tariff cuts designed to bring tariffs down to a uniform 5% by the year 2004 as decreed in Executive Order 264.

The neo-classical economic framework of liberalization, privatization, deregulation and cutbacks on social and public spending is what undergirds the Philippines 2000. The primacy of the market is paramount. This means passing on all profitable activities to the market, regardless of the social and environmental impact. Social services like education, health, and public utilities like water and energy should be privatized. Philippines 2000 is the contribution of the Ramos regime to the globalization agenda of transnational corporations and the advanced capitalist countries.

The language and concepts which were popularized by the UN and non-government organizations (NGOs) were effectively co-opted by the Ramos regime and got enshrined in Philippines 2000. These are terms like peoples' empowerment, sustainable development, civil society, etc. Philippines 2000, however, does not intend to empower people nor build and strengthen the domestic economy. In fact it will do the opposite, it will kill the small-scale firms and farms.

Let us now take a look at the impact on indigenous women.



## Chapter 4

### **Feminization and the flexibilization of labor in industry and services**

**T**he feminization and flexibilization of labor is one of the basis of the growing international competitiveness of the Philippines. The cut-throat competition between labor-surplus countries, especially those into garments, footwear, and electronics and micro-electronics production, is very favorable for transnational corporations. Comparative advantage means that the country which can offer the lowest wages and least benefits and welfare for workers, less environment regulations, will have a bigger advantage in attracting foreign corporations.

The cheap and docile labor which is the comparative advantage of the Philippines over other industrialized countries are actually women who are willing to accept any kind of employment, no matter how oppressive. Flexibilization of labor is an instrument used by the capitalists to bring down the wages and to be absolved of giving benefits to their workers. This phenomena of flexibilization has developed widely because of globalization. The competing countries have to offer the most attractive packages for the foreign investor or capitalist to come in. The best combination which the Philippine government can offer is feminized labor which is flexible.

Flexible labor is practiced in the country in several ways;

- job subcontracting – some aspects of the manufacturing process (packaging, maintenance, assembling garments, etc) are sub-contracted to part-time workers outside the factory setting

- piece-rate or quota system – workers whether inside or outside the factory are required to meet certain quotas within a defined period of time, then they are paid on a piece-rate basis
- casualization – non-regular employment where you can be under probation for as long as 2 years, but before you go on probation you have to work as an apprentice or become a learner or trainee
- increase the number of shifts per day or forcing the workers to work for as long as 20 hours a day

This cheap labor which can withstand the intensity and tedious demands of assembling garments, integrated circuits, and other electronic, and micro-electronic components comes in the form of young and single women. Thus, a picture of the labor force in the export-processing zones and the non-EPZs (i.e. the garment and electronic factories outside of the EPZs) in the past 20 years would show a female-dominated labor force. 70-85% of the total employment in these areas are women. Home workers who are involved in garment and linen manufacturing are 90% women.

Some quarters claim that globalization, especially the creation of industrial enclaves like the Export Processing Zones, has created tens of thousands of jobs for women and therefore this is a positive impact. However, this does not mean that these women are no longer oppressed and discriminated. They were just moved from one situation of oppression to another. It may be true that women are moved away from the household to the industrial estates (i.e. export processing zones), and by being waged-workers they have achieved a certain level of economic independence from their husbands or fathers. However, at the workplace they are subjected to other forms and more severe problems of gender discrimination.

In the past 20 years, the labor force in low-technology, labor-intensive, and occupationally hazardous industries (e.g. electronics, garments) has been increasingly dominated by females. There

is also feminization in the service industry as can be seen in the retail trade, tourism, telecommunications and banking. Even the export labor market is now more in need of women who will work as domestic helpers, entertainers, and workers in foreign electronic and garment factories.

## Chapter 5

# The liberalization of agriculture

**A**griculture is one of the sectors that heavily bear the brunt of globalization. The CARP (Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program) which the Aquino and Ramos governments proclaim as their cornerstone program is undermined by many exemptions and loopholes. The very nature of the Philippines 2000 in itself will not really allow the genuine implementation of agrarian reform. Many of the ancestral lands of the indigenous peoples in the country are not covered by agrarian reform. However, the government's pre-occupation to make its exports globally competitive directly affects the land tenure situation and production processes of indigenous peoples.

The agricultural production of major crops in the country have stagnated and even shrunk. The aggregate value of major crops produced in 1995 shrunk by 1.5%. The performance of agriculture production from 1993-1995 can be seen in Table 1.

The shrinkage in the production of major food and traditional export: palay (-2.5%), corn (-0.17%), sugarcane (-35.8%) and abaca (-7.8%), led to a net loss of 125,000 jobs in agriculture in 1995.

While the government uses natural calamities as a convenient scapegoat for a drop in the growth of agriculture, the actual and main reasons are the following:

- persistence of landlordism and very poor implementation of the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Program (CARP)
- land use conversions to escape from CARP

**Table 1**  
**Value of Production in Agriculture**  
**January to September, 1993-1995**  
**Percentage Change**

	Value	
	94/93	95/94
<b>Major Crops</b>	8.69	-1.51
Palay	29.78	-2.46
Corn	7.95	-0.17
Coconut	-1.30	7.4
Sugarcane	1.31	-35.8
Banana	1.21	1.73
Pineapple	2.96	1.81
Coffee	-1.59	1.13
Mango	3.94	20.66
Tobacco	-45.03	10.56
Abaca	7.08	-7.79
<b>Other Products</b>		
Livestock	5.18	5.49
Poultry	4.3	5.01
Fishery	0.94	1.85

*Source: Bureau of Agricultural Statistics (BAS)*

- crop conversions due to the restructuring of agricultural production to meet demands of global market
- exploitative practices of landlords-usurers-merchants in collusion with government agencies like the NFA (National Food Administration)

The loss of livelihood, loss of lands, leading to massive migration to the urban areas, and the consequent food insecurity, are the direct

impacts of globalization on agriculture and on those whose lives depend on agriculture. We shall now look into how this situation came to be.

The government has passed several laws in line with its commitment to liberalize agriculture. Some of these laws effectively nullify or directly contradict the objectives of sustainable development, an oft-repeated phrase in the MTPDP.

Some of the laws which have been passed to conform with the GATT commitments of the Philippine Government are the following:

- a. Republic Act (RA) 7652 or the Land Lease Act, which extends the allowable land lease period from 25 years to 50-75 years for both local and foreign investors.
- b. RA 7881 which exempts from CARP coverage all fish ponds, prawn farms and lands devoted to livestock, poultry and swine raising. It also exempts CARP implementation on commercial farms.
- c. RA 7900 or the High Value Crops Development Act of 1995 - this gives incentives, tax holidays, and infrastructure support for agribusiness corporations engaged in HVC production.
- d. RA 8178 or the Agricultural Tarification Act which removes the restrictions on the importation of basic agricultural products sufficiently produced in the country, like corn, onion, garlic, potatoes, cabbage, coffee beans, as well as meat products like pork, beef and chicken. This act repeals previous legislations which provided protection for local products. The laws which got repealed are the following:
  - i) RA 1296 (1955) which prohibits importation of onion, potato, garlic and cabbage;
  - ii) RA 2713 (1960) which bans importation of coffee beans, and
  - iii) RA 1297 (1978) which provides for centralized importation of beef.

- iv) RA 7607 or the Magna Carta for Small Farmers which prohibits the importation of agricultural products widely and sufficiently used produced in the country unless the Department of Agriculture declares a crisis or shortage of such products.
- v) RA 7308 or the Seed Industry Development Act prohibiting the importation of seeds produced in the Philippines.

## Chapter 6

### Impacts on indigenous women

**T**hese changes in the laws have far-reaching effects on indigenous women. The majority of indigenous women are still owner-tillers mainly engaged in subsistence food production. However, there is a growing population of cash crop producers. After colonization, some productive agricultural areas in the Cordillera and Mindanao have been converted into commercial gardens, rice farms, and plantations for rubber, palm oil, pineapples, etc.

Agricultural liberalization is the main thrust of the Medium Term Agricultural Development Program (MTADP) of the Aquino and Ramos governments. This section will look into the actual and potential impacts this program has on indigenous women.

#### **i) Inability to compete with imported crops**

The removal of the protection given to locally-produced crops like cabbage, potatoes, onions, coffee, etc. has led to the entry of cheaper surplus agricultural products. It is estimated that there are 50,000 potato growers in the vegetable gardens of Benguet in the Cordillera whose livelihood have been affected because of this. They could hardly compete with the imports coming in. Machine-sliced ready-to-fry potatoes from the United States led to the collapse of potato prices almost fifty percent of the price in 1990.<sup>6</sup>

---

6 Oliveros, Teresita, "Impact of New World Trade Regime on Peasant Women in the Philippines", *Third World Resurgence*, Issue No. 86 KDN PP6738/1/97, Third World Network, Penang, Malaysia, p.38



Earlier, some transnational food corporations like McDonalds and Wendy's entered into contract-growing arrangements\* (see page 44) with Benguet farmers for the production of potatoes. The contractual arrangements are usually lopsided in favour of the corporation. It is high risk whenever natural calamities occur. Nevertheless, the indigenous farmers still entered into these deals. With the entry of imported ready-to-fry potatoes, however, such arrangements have shifted to the production of seeds.

In Polomok, South Cotabato, Dole Philippines, Inc. (Dolefil) started contract-growing arrangements in 1995 with the help of the National Development Corporation and the DAR. About 3,400 hectares of land were covered by the farm management contract system. The farmers who own these lands were forced to enter into contract-growing arrangements so they can generate cash to pay for the amortization of their CLTs (Certificate of Land Transfer) and CLOAs (Certificate of Land Ownership Awards).

However, the production of pineapples that meet Dole's standards is very high risk. In most cases the farmers cannot survive with the lump sum paid to them by Dole. When natural calamities occur the farmers will always lose out and they end up leasing or selling back their lands to Dole. Contract-growing arrangements, in effect, makes them hired laborers in their own lands.

Now more than ever, the farmers are in no position to dictate the prices of their crops. Thus, during the times that the prices fall, the farmers just allow the vegetables to rot in their gardens and be used as fertilizers. The production costs which include the costs of agro-chemical inputs, seeds, irrigation, transporting the vegetables from the gardens to the roads and to the markets, etc. far exceed whatever they can earn.

While the Agriculture Tarification Act still provides for tarification of the products cited below, data shows that even if these are

slapped tariffs of 100% their prices will still come out cheaper than the local products. The table below shows this:

<b>Table 2</b>		
Product	Price of local product (pesos/kg)	Imported Product (p/kg)
garlic	87.49	17.61
onion (red)	18.97	8.72
cabbage	10.28	7.33
potato(white)	12.62	9.00
sugar (raw)	10.14	6.29

## **ii) The erosion of control over genetic resources and indigenous knowledge**

With the repeal of the Seed Industry Development Act, which prevented the importation of seeds produced locally, the indigenous peasant women are at the mercy of transnational agribusiness corporations. Seed growing for rice and corn in the Philippines is monopolized by Cargill-Ayala and Pioneer-San Miguel, a subsidiary of Pioneer Hi-Breed, the world's number one seed corporation.

In the Cordillera the main sources of certified seeds used in vegetable and cut flower production are Japanese corporations like Takii and Sakata and US corporations like Condor. There is a shift in contract-growing arrangements. Previously this was in the production of crops for food. Now farmers are pushed by the food and seed corporations to go into the production of seeds.

Agro-corporations are poised to expand their markets to control and manage germplasm and genetic stocks in strategic food communities. With farmers becoming more dependent on imported seeds, patenting will give the companies the huge profits in the

exercise of exclusive rights to these seeds. This further strengthens their total control over agricultural production in the country. Foreign agricultural TNCs will be able to monopolize seeds and agricultural technologies from the patent laws. Since monocultures are more appropriate for wide-scale commercial agricultural production, the use of certified seeds will become more widespread.

The Green Revolution which was implemented in the Philippines as early as the 1960s has significantly diminished the number of indigenous seed varieties in rice. Indigenous peasant women who are the traditional seed custodians were encouraged to shift to the use of the high yielding varieties (HYVs) developed by the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI). This was the case especially with the women found in the agriculturally rich lowland areas of Kalinga, Abra and Ifugao. Even some subsistence farmers also shifted to HYVs.

The increasing control of seed and biotechnology corporations over the seeds used in agriculture is marginalizing the indigenous peasant women. The TRIPS (Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights) clause in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) provides for the protection of the intellectual property rights (IPRs) of corporations who are able to demonstrate that their product is novel, can be commercially produced, and used in trade. The knowledge of the indigenous seed varieties is with farmers and indigenous women. However, the TRIPS provision will facilitate the appropriation of this knowledge and genetic resource from them into the hands of TNCs.

These corporations have the technology of genetic engineering which will allow them to do "innovations" over indigenous seeds and claim that their end product, the genetically-engineered seed, is novel. This will enable them to claim IPRs over these, making them the legal owners of such innovation and therefore should be paid royalties or patent fees for the use of such products. The TRIPs

clause disallows farmers from reproducing freely such seeds without paying the necessary fees.

To ensure that the TNCs will continue reaping profits from these seeds, they will push for the use of these on wider tracts of lands. This they will do either through their control over plantations or through legislations and government policies which they can easily influence. Mono-culturalization of agriculture is the logical result of high technology agriculture.

### **iii) Undermining of the rights of indigenous women to their ancestral lands and to self-determination in agricultural programmes**

Massive land and crop conversions are resulting in the further concentration of lands in the hands of transnational agri-business corporations and a few landlords.

The Bureau of Soils and Water Management reports show that in 1991, 118,000 hectares of irrigated lands were converted into non-agricultural uses.

Under the MTADP, the lands used for the production of crops for domestic food needs have been reduced. It has been determined that more lands should be converted to become Key Production Areas (KPAs) and Agrarian Reform Communities. These are designed to produce export winners or high-value crops (HVCs). HVCs are plants like cut flowers (chrysanthemums, anthuriums, statice, roses, etc.) and temperate vegetables and fruits such as asparagus, broccoli, cauliflower, peas, strawberries, pears, etc. Most of these crops are produced in the Cordillera region by the Igorots. In Mindanao where the Lumads are, the crops being produced are orchids, pineapples, bananas, asparagus, durians and other exotic tropical fruits.

The WTO Agreement In Agriculture pushes countries to produce agricultural exports rather than food for subsistence. In fact, the particularities and needs of developing countries who have more subsistence farmers than cash crop growers are ignored in this Agreement.

Under the Philippines 2000, the Ramos government is already zoning the rural landscape under its KPA approach. With its emphasis on agricultural efficiency and comparative advantage, the government encourages the development of economies of scale. KPAs will mean large-scale mechanized farms which will use agrichemicals intensively to produce crops at less cost and greater profit. Dependence on the global market encourages the shift into high-technology and ecologically destructive monocropping systems.

These will undermine the rights of indigenous peoples to their ancestral lands. It will likewise undermine genuine agrarian reform and encourage the bankruptcy of small farms. The further concentration of ownership of big landholdings to landlords and agribusiness TNCs is an inevitable result. Some of the big corporations which are engaged in HVC production are Dole Philippines, Del Monte Philippines, Marsman Estate Plantation, Davao Fruits Corporation and Tagum Agricultural Development Foundation.

Many big corporations took advantage of RA 7900, which provides incentives to agribusiness corporations that go into export crop production. Some of these are San Miguel Corporation, Nestle-Philippines, Guthrie, Janoub-Malaysia, which intensified their productions of so-called "export winners" such as palm oil, mango and pineapple. As a result of this, vast tracts of agricultural land previously devoted to staple crops are converted into export crop plantations. The further concentration of land and production capacity in the hands of few landowners and TNCs is worsening leaving hundreds of thousands of indigenous peasant women insecure over their rights to their ancestral lands.

In the Cordillera region some of the areas determined to become KPAs are Benguet, which will produce more broccolis and cut-flowers, Mountain Province for fruits like lychees, pears, and oranges, and Abra for mangoes.<sup>7</sup> In Mindanao, the areas planted with bananas and pineapples will diversify into the production of asparagus, mangoes, and palm oil.

The table below shows that among the selected HCVs, the ones produced in areas where indigenous peoples live, command the biggest volumes and higher values. These are crops like pineapple, mango (mainly produced in Mindanao), strawberry which come from the Cordillera, coffee and asparagus which come from the Cordillera and Mindanao.

<p><b>Table 3</b> <b>Export of selected HCVS, 1995</b></p>		
<b>Crops</b>	<b>Volume (million kg)</b>	<b>FOB value (million US\$)</b>
Mango	43,937.1	43,234.4
Calamansi	1.3	2.5
Watermelon	3,116.2	574.5
Strawberry	30.1	97.4
Papaya	2,312.9	717.5
Pineapple	163,431.9	24,544.8
Cashew	1,153.4	865.7
Black Pepper	0.7	4.8
Ginger	115.4	28.1
Onion	10,563.1	6,466.2
Orchids	5.0	21.5
Asparagus	4,919.1	7,105.5
Coffee	2,902.7	10,523.2

*Source: National Statistics Office*

<sup>7</sup> Medium Term Philippine Development Plan, National Economic Development Authority, NEDA 1992, Philippines

The design of the MTDAP is to ensure that the commitments of the government to the WTO are met. To facilitate the implementation of this, the government gets loans from international financing institutions like the World Bank or Asian Development Bank (ADB). In 1996, the Philippine government obtained a loan of \$44 million from the ADB and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) for a project called CHARM. This is the Cordillera Highland Agricultural Resource Management Project, which operates in Mountain Province, Abra and Benguet. This project helps facilitate the shift from subsistence to high value crops production. The areas which are not included in CHARM will be covered by CECAP (Central Cordillera Agricultural Program). This is a European Commission overseas development aid (ODA) program, which has virtually the same objectives as CHARM.

#### **iv) Threatened food security**

Historically, the food security of the country has already been compromised because of the neo-colonial trade that the Philippines has with the United States. In 1953, the Magsaysay regime signed the Agricultural Commodities Agreement with the US, which committed the country to perpetually import US Agricultural Surplus.

The series of IMF-WB SAPs conditionalities to liberalize trade has agricultural crops as targets. The deregulation move in 1984 was the removal of quantitative restrictions on importation of staple crops. Under the Aquino regime, 200 items were deregulated which included major vegetable and fruit crops. Then the Ramos regime further liberalized the importation of rice, poultry and meat products.

Aside from giving the control of the food industry to foreign transnational corporations, the government has also allowed the control of the Binondo Cartel over rice production and trading. This

cartel, which is also known as the Big Seven, controls 45% of the rice supply in Metro Manila and 39% in the whole of Luzon. It also controls 35% of rice production. They can therefore create artificial rice shortages if they want to raise the price of rice as what happened in early 1996 (Kilusan ng Magbubukid ng Pilipinas Paper, Elements for Attaining Food Security, People-Legislator Caucus on Food Security). The price of rice has risen by 135% in 1992 and during the 'rice crisis' in early 1996 it rose by another 61.3%.

It is true that the lowering of food prices due to competition from cheap imported food will initially benefit the consumers. However, once the local production is eroded and the country's food security becomes totally dependent on the foreign market, the prices will soar high.

Food importation is also a dangerous proposition because foreign exchange is used to pay for imports. This means that a foreign exchange crisis can bring about food scarcity especially if the country mainly imports its staple foods instead of producing it locally. This is why it is important that the local production of domestic food needs should still be given protection and support by the government.

The MTADP pushed for the reduction of lands planted to rice and corn from 5 million hectares to 1.9 hectares only. The remaining 3.1 million hectares will be used primarily for HVC production but around 300,000 hectares is allotted for real estate subdivisions, golf courses, theme parks, and some industrial estates. This is most ironical, considering that rice is the staple food in the country.

The removal of support and protective mechanisms for local agricultural production started with SAP conditionalities, and is further reinforced under the WTO.

For rice, the quantitative restriction on importation was not removed. However, the Philippine government has committed a



minimum access volume (MAV) to GATT/WTO when it signed the agreement. The commitment stipulates that the MAV will increase each year until quantitative restrictions are totally removed. For 1995 the MAV is 59,000 metric tons and in the year 2005 this will go up to 239,000 metric tons.

The unequal bargaining power in the GATT worked against the Philippines when the country submitted erroneous minimum access volumes as part of its commitment to GATT. When the error in the MAV for sugar was discovered by the private sector, the government quickly reviewed the rest of its agricultural commitments and found four other wrong figures on live swine, pork and live poultry and poultry meat. The magnitude of the mistake was significantly large ranging from 300% to 1000%. (See Table 4.)

When it attempted to correct it with GATT/WTO, the EU, Japan and the US protested.<sup>8</sup> Later when they agreed to correct the figures on live swine and sugar, the US stated that this will be only on the

<b>Table 4</b> <b>The Philippines' Minimum Access Commitments for Agriculture</b> <b>Initial Quota Quantity (1995)</b>			
	Technical Errors	Corrected Quotas	Percentage
Live Swine (hd)	2,570,000	2,570	1,000
Live Poultry (hd)	5,708,120	1,655,700	344
Pork (mt)	32,520	3,600*	903
Poultry Meat (mt)	14,090	2,218*	635
Sugar (mt)	103,400	38,000	272
hd - head mt - metric tones *deboned			

*Source: DTI (Department of Trade and Industry)*

<sup>8</sup> Personal discussions of the author in 1997 with a key negotiator of the Philippine government in the WTO who is based in Geneva.

condition that “nothing else follows”. Under the WTO, a country will be granted concessions in exchange for another.

The Philippines’ minimum access volume commitments for other products of agriculture are the following:

One of the deregulation moves carried out by the government in compliance with SAPS is the deregulation of the marketing of staple crops carried out by the National Food Authority (NFA). In the mid-1980s the Philippine government committed to reduce NFA’s grains procurement and completely phase it out by 1998 in exchange of a loan of \$300 million in 1987, an \$80 million grant from USAID in 1991, and P125 million loan from ADB in 1993 (IBON Special Release, July 1994, No. 6). Other commitments which were conceded by the government are the following:

- Reduction of the subsidy of NFA from P3.6 billion to P2 billion, and by 1998 this will be totally removed
- Suspension of lending scheme to farmers
- Removal of quota restrictions defined under the Magna Carta for Small Farmers
- Removal of subsidies for fertilizers

Local production is also suffering because of the reduction or withdrawal of agricultural subsidies. The Department of Agriculture’s budget has already been reduced by almost 50%, from P16.6 billion to P9 billion in 1994. Even before GATT was signed the National Food Authority had announced its new financing scheme, which would impose a total phaseout of corn procurement in 1994, to be followed by rice in 1998.

These are all preparations for the privatization of government bodies such as the NFA. With the cut in budget, much-needed-support mechanisms such as rural credit, irrigation structures, farm to market roads, food storage, were either decreased or removed

altogether. Otherwise the government's option is to acquire loans through projects like CHARM.

#### **v) Increasing health hazards for indigenous women and the further degradation of the environment**

The MTDAP's goal is to cut down land use in agriculture by 30% but to maintain a high level of productivity. This means the more extensive use of high-technology agriculture, which means agro-chemicals and genetically engineered seeds and bio-pesticides. These technologies, which are developed and controlled by agricultural and biotechnology transnational corporations, are highly protected by intellectual property rights.

The multi-million peso vegetable industry in Benguet extensively uses huge quantities of toxic agri-chemicals. In 1992, it was estimated that in Benguet alone 124,933 liters of insecticides were used.<sup>9</sup> The total value of chemicals sold in Benguet in 1992 was around P165 million, which was used in 10,414 hectares of land.

This so-called modernization of crop production or high-technology agricultural production has the net effect of further concentrating the control of agriculture in the hands of agro-chemical and biotechnology TNCs. A list of 51 pesticides currently being sold in Baguio and Benguet would show that most of these are products of companies like Hoechst, Bayer, DuPont, Seneca, Ciba-Geigy, etc.<sup>10</sup>

The most powerful of these corporations, such as Cargill, Monsanto, Dow Chemicals etc., have their representatives sitting in Codex Alimentarius. This is the multilateral body that is supposed to

---

9 *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, 26 Dec. 1994, "Pesticide Use in Vegetable Industry Increasing", Quezon City, Philippines, p.5

10 Cheng, Charles, Dr. and Kathrine Bersamira, "Pesticides: Its Hazardous Effects on the Benguet Farmers and the Environment," *Unique Press*, Baguio City, Philippines, 1997

regulate the use of fertilizers and pesticides in food. They were able to influence this body to lower the requirement of the level of pesticide residues in food which is causing further pesticide poisoning.

The impacts of agricultural modernization on the ecology will worsen. These range from the degradation of soil fertility (in the Philippines there is already 70% degradation of soils), massive land degradation, the pollution of water aquifers, loss of natural enemies to pests, and the loss of biodiversity due to the use of fewer certified seed varieties.

The health of indigenous women, who are both producers and consumers, is compromised because of these technologies and because of the need of farmers to survive the cut-throat competition. High-value crops need massive amounts of pesticides and fertilizers which will be applied by the farmers. To cut down on production cost the use of protective equipments are dispensed with. High rates of pesticide poisoning are documented in the plantations of bananas, pineapples, and the commercial vegetable gardens.

This is the case with production of cut-flowers. A documentary entitled "Women, Flowers and Death" which was released in 1986 showed the extents of pesticide use by women farm-workers in cut-flower plantations. Many of them are suffering from respiratory diseases, nausea, skin diseases, kidney diseases and blood poisoning. These are all traced to the toxic effects of the pesticides used.

To be able to survive the competition with cheap foreign imports some farmers also resort to the use of formalin to make the products last longer in the market. The use of formalin is prevalent with eggplants and string beans.

Another threat to the environment is massive land use conversion schemes such as the conversion of agricultural lands and forests

into golf courses, mining areas and dam projects. Presently there are 70 golf courses in the whole country. Another 30 are in the pipeline for construction. Fil-Estate alone is going to build 13 golf courses in the major provinces, including areas already planted with rice.

The environmental repercussions, not to mention the social impacts are serious. It is estimated that one 18-hole golf course will occupy 85 hectares of land. This consumes 6,500 cubic meters of water daily, which is enough to irrigate 65 hectares of land, which can produce 276,000 kilos of rice. This can also supply 15,000 residences in Metro Manila.<sup>11</sup>

Tremendous environmental devastation and health hazards are brought about by mining operations. At the turn of the century commercial mining came into indigenous peoples communities and these are continuing up to the present. The globalization and liberalization of the mining industry led to the legislation of the Philippine Mining Act of 1995. Approximately 12 million hectares are covered by applications for mining operations. This is almost 40% of the total land area of the whole country. More than half of this area covers indigenous peoples' communities.

The mining operations have led to the pollution of soils, rivers, rice-fields with toxic chemicals used in the extraction and processing of ores including the by-products. Mine tailings dam accidents happen frequently leading to destruction of marine biodiversity. The health problems of people in mining areas range from skin diseases, respiratory problems like tuberculosis, silicosis, and asbestosis, to reproductive problems. Drying up of water aquifers compounds the problem because proper sanitation cannot be maintained leading to gastro-intestinal diseases. The testimonies of indigenous women on how their burdens and problems increased because of

---

11 *Philippine Daily Inquirer* ( 28 July 1996), " Water Requirement of Golf Courses", Quezon City, Philippines, p.1

the health and environmental problems caused by mining have been documented in several conferences.

#### **vi) Destruction of indigenous economies and increased outmigration**

The most direct effect of globalization on indigenous women is the significant shift from subsistence production to the production of cash crops. It was mentioned earlier that around 60-70 % of indigenous women are small owner-tillers who are engaged in subsistence food production. The traditional production and resource management systems which indigenous peoples have depended upon and developed over hundreds of years are seriously threatened.

Indigenous methods of production and resource management are considered inefficient and backward by the global market economy whose mantra is global competitiveness and comparative advantage. The creation of KPAs is a major step in the full integration of indigenous economies into the global market. Hundreds of thousands of indigenous women will have to abandon their sustainable agricultural and resource management practices.

Government employment statistics show that in 1995, 128,000 agricultural jobs were lost. This is due to the land conversions taking place in areas identified as industrial estates and growth areas, such as the CALABARZON in Southern Luzon, the growth areas in Mindanao, etc. The indigenous peoples affected by these developments are the Dumagats in Southern Luzon and the Lumads in Mindanao. Many of the certificates of land transfer (CLTs) and CLOAs (certificate of land ownership award) which the government has been bragging about as proof of its successful agrarian reform program are now being cancelled and confiscated by the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR).

As early as December 1993, the Department of Agrarian Reform (DAR) reported that there are 22,991 CLT (Certificate of Land Transfer) and CLOA (Certificate of Land Ownership Award) which were cancelled. These former beneficiaries of CLT/CLOA who are now referred to as leaseholders are now reverted into being tenants. The former tenants become contractual farmworkers.

In 1995, the KMP (National Federation of Peasant Organizations in the Philippines) estimated that 600,000 farmers in sugar, corn, rice and vegetable farms would be displaced with the flooding of cheap surplus imported agricultural products. 450,000 of them were sugar workers whose jobs were threatened because of the impending withdrawal of the US of its Sugar Import Quota from the Philippines and the plan of Sugar 2000 to use machines to replace the farmworkers. Sugar production worldwide is very much threatened because of the commercial production of tissue-cultured sugar substitutes.

Others who will be displaced are 20,000-50,000 rice farmers, 45,000 to 62,000 corn farmers, and 40,000 to 50,000 vegetable farmers and farm workers.

The displacement from the rural areas brought women to the urban centers, and most of them end up with the urban poor in the slum areas. A great bulk of these women also applied for overseas contract work. Because of the massive land conversions which took place in the Southern Tagalog region, this region is ranked number three in the list of regions with the biggest number of overseas contract workers (OCWs).

The outmigration of women from the countryside into the cities and urban centers and from the Philippines to other countries has increased tremendously over the past decade. Outmigration has a very destabilizing effect on women, especially those who have been involved with rural agricultural production most of their lives. Women are used to ease the unemployment problems in the coun-

try and to supply the much-needed foreign exchange, which will pay for the foreign debt of governments and corporations.

According to the Overseas Workers' Welfare Association (OWWA), in 1997 the total number of Filipinos overseas contract workers was 6 million. Three million were documented, which means they were legal, and 3 million were undocumented or illegal workers. The Cordillera region contributed 214,285 legal OCWs and 428,571 illegals. 80% of the OCWs were women.<sup>12</sup> The main bulk of Cordillera OCWs are in Hong Kong. Out of 10 Cordillera women going out, 7 to 8 land in Hong Kong.

In 1994 the total number of Filipina domestic helpers was 70,000. Ten percent of this, 7,000, came from the various Cordillera provinces. For the first quarter of 1998, the total number of Filipina domestic helpers almost doubled to 138,000.<sup>13</sup> Approximately 10% or 13,800, were Cordillera women in Hong Kong that year. These women are the ones who suffer from the worst kinds of sexual harassment and abuse.

Women are known to bear the bigger burdens in subsistence food production, household work and in the informal economy. However, with the recent developments these burdens have multiplied. More than men, women are the ones who get into the full range of economic activities in the informal economy. These range from entering as domestic helpers, accepting laundering of clothes, rearing of domestic animals for sale, vending of vegetables, fruits, fish, etc.

Since some of them are still located in communities nearby industrial estates they are also the ones who accept the subcontractual

---

12 Interview by author with Mila Pena, the Director of the OWWA Regional Office in the Cordillera Administrative Region, (26 Feb. 1998), Baguio City, Philippines

13 *Philippine Standard* (3 March 1998), "Filipina Migrant Workers in Hongkong Increase", Quezon City, p.1



jobs like, crocheting, embroidery, placing buttons on garments, making papier maches, ceramics, and other side activities like washing the bottles for the softdrinks corporations. Some of the younger women are pushed into prostitution.

In areas where conversion of lands to theme parks, golf clubs and real-estate subdivisions are taking place, the prices of lands and taxes have risen beyond the reach of the indigenous peoples. This is what is happening in Baguio City with the privatization of the former Camp John Hay. Most of the prime lands in the city are now owned by rich Filipinos and foreigners. Meanwhile, many indigenous peoples are found in the congested residence areas and in urban poor communities.

### **vii) Increasing economic security among indigenous women**

The displacement of indigenous women from subsistence agriculture push them to go to the city to apply for lowly-paid, labor-intensive and short-term employment. Most of them, however, end up with the informal economy or join the swelling ranks of the unemployed.

Many of the new graduates apply for jobs at the Baguio City Export Processing Zone (BCEPZ). However, with the flexibilization of labor most of them end up as casual employees with the sub-contractors. The BCEPZ houses 7 foreign-owned companies producing garments, electronic products and plastics.

This zone employs a total of 2,975 workers, 80% of whom are women working in highly oppressive and exploitative conditions.<sup>14</sup> Texas Instrument is the biggest employer, with almost 1,000 work-

---

14 Carino, Jacqueline (1997), "Women as Victims of Violence at Work", Chaneg, Vol.5 No.1, Cordillera Women's Education and Resource Center, Inc., Baguio City, Philippines, p.24

ers. Eighty percent of these are women mostly new graduates from the universities. When the demand for electronic products goes down, Texas Instruments cuts the work days and hours of the workers. However when the demand is high the workers are required to work for as long as 12 hours without additional pay.

Just like most of the Export Processing Zones there is a no-union policy in BCEPZ. The average daily wage is P89.00 way below the legislated minimum wage of P130.00. Most of them do not receive benefits such as maternity, vacation, and sick leave. Verbal abuse and sexual harassment from male supervisors is commonly experienced by these women.

Since older and married women have a very slim chance of getting jobs in the factories, they have to augment the meagre family income by over-extending themselves in the informal economy. They become street vendors, sell cooked food in schools, streets, factories, etc., produce handicrafts, etc.

They even feel lucky if they get sub-contracted jobs from garment factories and other factories in the industrial estates even if these pay very cheaply. They set up micro-enterprises, which even the World Bank now wants to reinforce, instead of restructuring the bigger economy to become more sensitive to women and the poor.

Unfortunately, this increase in participation in the informal economy leaves them less time to rest. The researches have shown that a typical poor Filipino woman works for almost 16-20 hours per day doing paid and unpaid work, leaving her no time to rest. With poverty increasing all over, competition even for informal livelihood becomes greater, not to speak of competition for jobs in the formal sector.

The comparative advantage of countries like the Philippines in the global economy lies with its massive surplus labor, of which the majority are women. This advantage is achieved with the super-

exploitation of women who have no choice but to accept jobs, which are part-time or contractual, labor-intensive, and very unstable. The majority of the factory-based workers and home-based outworkers in industries (such as garments and electronic) are women. These same industries employ flexible production systems.

Basic labor rights such as minimum wage, security of tenure, collective bargaining, unionization, health and occupational safety, anti-discrimination laws, and benefits like maternity leave, and separation pay, are no longer ensured even in the revised labor laws. Countries violating these rights have a comparative advantage over those who are promoting them. In the Philippines, the government is effectively deregulating these through flexibilization. Therefore, while the women do get employment, this is under the most oppressive conditions.

#### **viii) Erosion of small-scale home-based handicraft industries run by indigenous women**

The small-scale home-based handicraft industry run mainly by indigenous women is threatened by the liberalization of the garment industry. These women have been knitting sweaters and weaving blankets which enjoyed brisk sales in the 1970s to late 1980s. During those times it was common to see Igorot women selling the knitted sweaters, bonnets, etc. in their stalls or in the sidewalks. Nowadays, what is seen more are Igorot women selling imported second-hand clothing, blankets, sheets, etc.

#### **ix) Worsening poverty**

The government claims an improvement in poverty figures from 37% to 35% in 1995. However, this is arrived at by tampering with the figures. The World Bank has even coached the government to

adjust the minimum food requirements downwards in order to get an even better reduction of the poverty statistics. It said that the poverty figures for the country would be reduced if caloric standards used were based on third world lifestyles and not the US FDA (Food and Drug Administration) standards.

However, the government's own poverty threshold in 1988 inflated to current prices to P7,700 in 1994 would show that 70% of Filipino families live below the poverty line. The majority of the poor are in rural areas and do not even earn enough to fulfill a family's monthly minimum food requirement of P3,125. Workers' wages have been eroded. The nominal daily wage of P145 is eroded to P63.80 at 1988 prices compared to wages then of P69.33. (PD1, 6.7.96)<sup>15</sup>

#### **x) Increasing incidents of sexual abuse and violence against women**

The frequency and magnitude of sexual harassments, abuse, and violence against women within the workplace has increased.. Male supervisors and managers in many companies do not hesitate to sexually harass women because there is a ready pool of unemployed women eager to change those who get fired because they complained.

The worst forms of abuse and violence are, however, reported by OCWs. Some employers, in countries which traditionally have very low regard for women, treat their domestic helpers as slaves whom they can beat and rape anytime they want to. Since the Philippine government needs all these job openings to absorb the surplus labor, it hardly raises its voice with the governments of countries where these abuses happen.

---

<sup>15</sup> *Philippine Daily Inquirer* (7 June 1996), "Harder Times for Filipinos", Quezon City, Philippines

According to OWWA (Overseas Workers Welfare Association), in 1996, 105 OCWs died outside of the Philippines, 49 came home mentally ill, and 62 came home with various physical disabilities. In 1995, there were 40,000 reported cases of abuse.<sup>16</sup> Multifarious problems are met by the OCWs, starting from the application process here in the country, up to their places of work abroad.

While they are in the Philippines, they are victimized by fake and unscrupulous recruitment agencies and recruiters. Huge amounts of money are fleeced from them and they are lucky if they do get jobs. For those who do get the jobs not everyone becomes a legal worker. A significant number are brought into the foreign countries illegally with the collusion of the recruitment agency itself, some airport and customs employees, and the partners of the recruitment agencies abroad.

The common complaints of the women OCWs range from overworking; day-offs and other promised benefits are not given; inhumane working and living conditions (e.g. absence of sleeping quarters, irregular meals and inadequate food, etc.); verbal, physical and sexual abuse; non-payment of wages, etc. Horrible stories of how women are degraded, oppressed, and how they become objects of the worst forms of physical and sexual violence have been reported and documented time and again from those who are working in the Middle East countries, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, Japan, and even countries like Papua New Guinea. News of Filipina OCWs being raped, turned into sex slaves, becoming victims of white slavery, etc. are read almost daily in the papers.

---

16 Tujan, Antonio (1995), IBON Special Release on "The Crisis of Philippine Labor Migration", IBON Databank, Quezon City, p.3

### **xi) Heavier unpaid women's reproductive work**

With the cuts in budgets for social services and welfare under SAPs, women are burdened more than ever with unpaid work. The reproductive work of caring and nurturing the family, the tribe, and the community still remains the task of indigenous women. The meagre government institutions which are supposed to provide for basic health care services, day care, etc., are being closed down or given to private initiatives.

### **xii) Increasing social problems and family problems**

The long absence of women from their homes because of overseas contract work has created a situation where many households of indigenous women are run by the men or by the grandparents. According to OWWA (Overseas Workers Welfare Association) research, incidence of incest and adultery committed by the husbands has increased. Many children of OCWs also indulge in anti-social activities like drugs, petty crimes, heavy drinking, etc.

Most men in the country are not socialized to nurture and care for the children. The departure of their wives to earn abroad leaves them with responsibilities they are not familiar with. When family problems occur and the woman abroad is confronted with oppressive working conditions, some of them become mentally unstable. The increasing frequency of OCWs coming home in a mentally deranged state is usually caused by a combination of all these various factors.

In many cases, the absence of the mother means the responsibility is passed on to other women like the daughters, the grandmother or the sisters.

## Chapter 7

### **Dilemmas in handling the globalization agenda**

**T**he main feature of present-day globalization is the primary role given to the market to determine how goods and services should be produced and distributed. The market by its very nature is gender-blind. The logic it understands is the logic of competition, efficiency, and profit accumulation. Globalization which mainly relies on transnational corporations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization, as its vehicles, likewise, can't be sensitive to gender issues unless it reinforces its agenda.

Globalization is antithetical to genuine development and gender-sensitive development, because it undermines sustainability at the local levels. This is where women can be more in control as seen in subsistence agriculture or in local marketing, micro-enterprises, local trading initiatives and in the informal economy. By diminishing the role of the state in the production and distribution of goods and services, it further disempowers institutions which can possibly legislate positive affirmation policies in favor of women.

The power to decide on how local economies should run is shifted to TNCs, the WB, IMF and the WTO. The GATT trade policies and rules which the WTO is implementing focuses more on how barriers to the trading interests of highly industrialized nations can be removed or liberalized. It does not deal with the social and environmental impacts of globalization.

In this WTO era, everything is being linked to trade. International trade becomes the end-all and be-all of economic activity, instead of being a means to economic development. The WTO Agreements

have successfully integrated all domestic and national concerns into its scope for governance even if such concerns are not directly trade-related.

These are areas like investments, services, intellectual property rights, etc. It is empowered to ensure that peoples' cultures, ethical values, practice of democracy, use of knowledge, and even food habits become consistent with the global economic and trade rules it should safeguard.

Trade is now being linked to concerns like women's rights, human rights, environmental standards, etc., which are being used wrongly to promote protectionist goals of the industrialized nations. It is in this light that the handling of gender issues and indigenous peoples issues in the present globalization phase becomes more complex.

Feminists are divided on how to handle the issue. There are those who see globalization as inevitable and therefore what is needed is to see how women's perspectives can be integrated into the globalization agenda. Then there are those who see globalization in its comprehensive political-economic context and therefore won't just settle for integrating women's perspectives. Instead they are challenging the whole globalization project because it is inherently anti-women and anti-poor.

Indigenous peoples also have a diversity of views on how to deal with globalization. Most nation-states have institutionalized the oppression and discrimination of indigenous peoples. Thus we are not sure whether it is to our advantage that such states are further weakened to a point where they can't regulate the market and the corporations. Some indigenous peoples feel that it is even easier to deal with corporations directly than to have governments interfering.

On the other hand, the market economy and corporations are instrumental in eroding the sustainable indigenous economic and production systems. Many of the environmental problems con-



fronting indigenous peoples have been caused by corporations, such as those engaged in mining, oil extraction, logging, etc. The increasing power of the market to determine how indigenous peoples should live is already having disastrous effects. In most instances the government and corporations have colluded to appropriate the lands and resources of indigenous peoples.

What is clear from all the impacts discussed earlier, however, is that globalization is having more negative than positive impacts. The values perpetuated such as global competitiveness, homogenization, monoculturalization, commodification and gross consumerism are against many of our indigenous values and beliefs. Cultural and biological diversity and the diversity of economic and political systems that indigenous peoples have developed and sustained are seriously threatened by the globalization agenda.

It is to the interest of indigenous women to steadfastly challenge this globalization agenda. Any system that degrades and commodifies women should be challenged and changed.

---

## Endnotes

- \* (Page 2) *Cross-retaliation* means that if a country is proven guilty of violating a trade agreement, the aggrieved party can retaliate against it in an area which can hurt the economic interest of the guilty party more effectively. For example, even if the area in dispute is trade in aquaculture products if retaliation here will not hurt the guilty party significantly, the aggrieved party can cross retaliate by banning entry of gold or any other product which will have a more devastating impact.
  - \* (Page 20) *Contract-growing* is a form of hedging where the corporation (such as McDonalds) will estimate the amount of yield per hectare of land and will enter into a contract with the producer. The total cost of the expected harvest will be agreed upon by both parties. The corporation will provide all the inputs needed by the farmer to ensure the quality of the product. However, all these expenses will be paid back by the farmer when the harvest comes. If a calamity occurs and the yield is not delivered the farmer will still pay back the cost of inputs.
-

## GLOBALIZATION AND ITS IMPACTS ON INDIGENOUS WOMEN: THE PHILIPPINE EXPERIENCE

The current process of globalization is having disastrous and far-reaching effects on indigenous communities around the world. Economic liberalization and the increasing power of global market forces in determining local economic and social realities, has resulted in negative impacts on indigenous women in particular. This paper examines the actual and potential impacts of globalization on indigenous women, using the Philippine context as a case study.

The author argues that the current form of globalization, which undermines sustainability at the local levels, is antithetical to genuine and gender-sensitive development. The transfer of decision-making power from the state to global bodies such as transnational corporations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization, further weakens the possibilities of achieving economic and social equity for indigenous women. It is imperative, therefore, for indigenous women to actively challenge and transform the globalization agenda.

**VICTORIA TAULI CORPUZ** is the Director of Tebtebba Foundation (Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education) — an indigenous peoples' international NGO based in Baguio City in the Philippines which undertakes research on the impact of globalization on indigenous peoples. Victoria is an indigenous woman, a Kankana-ey Igorot from the Philippines. She has written many articles on indigenous women and on globalization as well as on the environment and development issues of indigenous peoples. She is the convenor of the Asian Indigenous Women's Network. She is the Chairperson-Rapporteur of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Populations, a position she has held since 1996.

### TWN GENDER SERIES

is a series of papers published by Third World Network on gender and development issues from a Third World perspective. It highlights the obstacles that hinder women from enjoying secure and sustainable livelihoods, such as those posed by the process of globalization. It provides proposals aimed at gender justice and equality, and the empowerment and progress of women.

ISBN: 983-9747-63-0