

Research Proposal

Name of research project: Women's Voice in Policy Spaces Shaping the Global Economy

Submitted by (researcher(s) and hub): Stephanie Barrientos, Global Hub

RPC theme: Empowering Work Theme

Summary (100 words)

Globalisation and the liberalisation of markets are transforming women's lives. Yet women's perspectives and voices rarely inform the decision making processes that shape the global economy. This research will examine whether and how women's organisations and feminist actors are able to engage in and influence global economic policy processes, with a particular focus on corporate and trade policy spaces. It will explore how new leverage points, innovative interventions and alliances can help to open up new pathways to women's empowerment within corporate and trade space.

Project Proposal (*no less than 1000 words overall*)

Please complete all sections

1. Justification

1.1 What change does the research seek to bring about?

Policy actors engaged in the global economy often operate on the implicit assumption that their actions bear no relation to 'social processes' that affect women or are 'gender neutral' affecting women and men in equivalent ways. The primary aim of the research is to examine how the gender sensitivity of policy processes in the global economy can be enhanced (with a particular focus on the corporate and trade spheres) in order to improve the benefits of globalisation for women. It will: (a) analyse the positive and negative implications of global economic processes for women (b) examine how awareness can be raised amongst key policy actors of implications of their interventions for women and (c) explore how women's voice and perspectives can be better articulated in global economic policy spaces by policy and civil society actors able to influence the process. As a consequence, the research would aim to support enhancement of the beneficial impacts and reduction of the negative impacts of interventions by corporate and trade actors on women.

1.2 How is the research linked to this change?

Many corporate and trade actors are becoming more aware of the need to take account of the social consequences of their decisions making. The more progressive amongst them

are also aware that their decisions will have differential consequences for women and men. Yet they are often ill equipped (in terms of analytical approach, capacity and available tools) to understand how to better ensure their decisions yield more positive benefits for women. The project will aim to contribute to the advancement of women's voice and perspective in corporate and trade spaces through supporting those actors able to engage in the global policy process, providing them with better information, capacity and tools to help advance women's empowerment.

2. Methods

2.1 How will you carry out your research?

The research will be carried out at different levels. At a conceptual level, more analytical work will be based on a review of the relevant theoretical literature on gender, economic power, economic and social rights, and global civil society. Reference will also be made to conventional and feminist literature on trade and corporate accountability. Critical reflection on relevant analytical approaches will provide the basis for advancing conceptual thinking on women's engagement with global economic policy processes.

At a policy level, the project will draw on a combination of research methods to examine existing policy processes, how to engage with and influence relevant policy actors (conventional trade and corporate actors as well as more critical civil society actors and organisations). The research will involve active participation in corporate and trade policy spaces where issues related to women's empowerment can be raised. This participation will be systematically documented and recorded, including notes on tensions, debates, discourses and perspectives (stated and unstated) from a gender lens. From debates within these, specific issues will be selected for further interrogation (for example on corporate purchasing practices and women's employment; economic partnership agreements and women's access to trade through initiatives such as the MFA Forum). These issues will involve more indepth research based on: interviews with key informants and actors across commercial and policy space; workshops with invited key actors (commercial, trade, government, women's organisations and civil society).

Action research methods will be used such as engagement in interactive email networks, blogs and/or workshops/conferences where it is possible to raise issues directly with key actors and participants in the field. Interaction will also be achieved through a variety of published works, including briefing paper and conference papers. These will be further developed through discussion in relevant fora and receipt of critical comments from those engaged in the issues.

2.2 Who will you do your research with?

The research will be carried out collaboratively with different individuals/groups depending on the level.

At an analytical/conceptual level, it will draw on, and interact with, the research project 'Conceptualising Women's Empowerment' (Eyben and Cornwall). The aim will be to extend conceptual thinking advanced in that project to related critical analysis of the nature of women's empowerment within more specific economic space in the global sphere.

At a policy level, the research will draw on, and evolve collaboratively through engagement with selected civil society actors who are involved with specific activities promoting women's participation in the global economy.

Research for the RPC Women's Empowerment will be linked up to ongoing research on trade and corporate policy, adding a more targeted focus on the specific implications for women workers and traders. For example, research on the MFA Forum will be carried out through interactive engagement with civil society and NGO members of the Forum, through playing an advisory role, providing agreed research inputs, and jointly participating in meetings and discussions on the issues. Research on corporate purchasing practices will be carried out through supporting and critically commenting on NGO documents and campaign material, jointly organising and participating in informal networks of corporate and civil society actors, and jointly hosting workshops with corporate buyers and managers.

2.3 Who will be involved in doing the research?

The research will be carried out primarily by Stephanie Barrientos, but she will be working collaboratively with other colleagues within and beyond the RPC as necessary. For example, on the MFA Forum she will be working with Arianna Rossi (ex-ILO DPhil); on the purchasing practices project she is collaborating with Labour Behind the Label and Clean Clothes Campaign and Action Aid; on trade issues she is linking up with One World Action and WIDE.

3. Communications

3.1 Who are your key audiences?

There will be multiple audiences for the research. These include: academic and policy researchers for the more conceptual work; civil society organisations, policy actors and corporate/trade professionals for the more practical policy oriented work (including large corporates such as Tesco, Gap and Nike as well as trade professionals and negotiators within the WTO and EU; government and multi-lateral actors (including DFID, Commonwealth Secretariat and ILO) for wider policy analysis.

A key challenge to the research will be to reach both audiences (such as trade unions and ngos) who are open to engaging with issues around women's empowerment *as well as* audiences (such as corporate buyers and trade negotiators) who find such concepts 'irrelevant' or even 'alien' to their professional activity.

3.2 How do you plan to reach them?

An important dimension of the communication will be to use different media and discourses to deliver messages from the research to different audiences. The following are examples based on dividing the audiences into different groups:

- i. Academic and policy research audiences will be reached through more standard means of communication including university seminars, conferences, working papers, book chapters and journal articles.
- ii. Progressive civil society organisations and policy actors who are open to a gender perspective and developing interventions beneficial to women will be reached through a combination of the above academic activities, as well as at workshops, and publication of a short briefing paper.

iii. Corporate and trade actors more closed to issues around women's empowerment will have to be approached within their own 'terrain' by attending relevant events (such as EC meetings, CSR and ETI events, where short interventions and brief outlines can be circulated providing key messages relevant to the occasion.

3.3 How will you know if you've managed to succeed in this?

The research will be tracked at three different levels:

i. Academic: through acceptance of conference papers, working paper, journal articles.

ii. Progressive civil society and policy actors: through active engagement at workshops, conferences, number of invitations to attend events, advice on related issues, contribute to debates and publications.

iii. Corporate and trade actors: influence on this group will be more difficult to track. Number of events attended and interventions in those events will be one means, but this does not necessarily mean they have 'heard' the messages transmitted, and will be simultaneously receiving messages from multiple sources. Ultimately the aim is to contribute to a gradual shift in their focus towards issues around women's empowerment.

3.4 Outputs

Specific outputs from the research will be aimed at both the above audiences. They will include:

- One synthesis Working Paper
- Conference papers (minimum 2)
- Journal articles (minimum 2)
- Policy Briefing
- Participation in communication plans of different actors (including dialogue forums, workshops, video and publications) and in country communication.

4. Capacity Building

4.1 What capacity will be built through the research

Through engagement with civil society organisations (trade unions, NGOs and women's organisations) working on corporate and trade issues, the research aims to enhance their capacity to influence global economic actors and policy spaces. They will also contribute to developing the capacity of Stephanie Barrientos to engage with conventional and commercial actors within global economy policy spaces.

4.2 What support will you need to do this?

Primary support will be provided by the Global Hub. Additional support will come through linking research for the RPC with other research on corporate and trade policy carried out by Stephanie Barrientos.

5. Collaboration

5.1 What other RPC members will you collaborate with?

As part of this project, I plan to visit at two of the regional research partners during the duration of the project. I plan to attend one meeting of the West African hub, where relevant activities are being explored, provisionally in December 2007, subject to final agreement. There are also plans to attend a workshop in Brazil in June 2008 to participate in the workshop on domestic workers, and bring a global perspective. This will also provide an opportunity to develop further research with the Latin American Hub.

Alongside this project, but linked to it, Stephanie Barrientos will be working with the Egyptian partners in the RPC supporting the global economic dimension to their research on the changing nature of women's employment in Egypt. This will be funded separately from the Global Hub.

5.2 What will you collaborate on?

Work with the West Africa hub will be to explore global-local linkages to our research, and potential for further collaborative research. Collaboration with the Latin America will be initiated in this phase of the RPC, to be developed in the next phase, around the international migration of domestic workers.

5.3 What support do you need to do this?

None in addition to resources requested below. Separate resources are being sought to work with the Egypt research group.

6. Learning and Accountability

6.1 What will you do to build in opportunities for review and reflection into your research process?

I have already started to keep a research diary, where relevant meetings and interactions are noted. This will be kept through out the course of the research. Research papers (working and conference papers) will provide an opportunity for more reflective analysis of the findings of the research.

7. Project Milestones

Quarter	Activity	Budget
January - March 2007	Preparatory Phase Attend Cairo Workshop	
April - June 2007	Literature review Analytical and conceptual work Initiate research on MFA Forum Report for Commonwealth Ministers Meeting on Gender, Work and Poverty	Researcher time = £5,000 Office Costs = £67
July - September 2007	Analytical, empirical and conceptual work. Co-hosting/facilitating Clean Clothes Campaign workshop on purchasing practices. DSA Conference presentation	Researcher time = £5,000 Office Costs = £67 UK/European Travel = £200
October - December 2007	Draft paper on gender, corporate accountability and trade	Researcher time = £5,000 Office Costs = £67 Travel to Ghana = £1,000

	Attend Ghana RPC workshop	UK/European Travel = £200
January - March 2008	Global Hub and RPC workshops (Feminisms in Development)	Researcher time = £5,000 Office Costs = £67
April - June 2008	Attend Brazil RPC Workshop Revise draft paper for journal article	Researcher time = £5,000 Office Costs = £67 Travel to Brazil = £1,000 IDS Working Paper = £1,000
July - September 2008	Submit journal article	Researcher time = £5,000 Office Costs = £67
October - December 2008		I