

**International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR)**

**8th International Conference, Barcelona, Spain, July 9-12, 2008**

**Panel Proposal**

**Empowerment of women in a globalized world?**

Coordinator: Sachiko Nakagawa (Japan)

**PURPOSE of this PANEL**

The purpose of this panel is two-fold: first to think about the potential of third sector organizations as “change makers” empowering women in a globalized world, and second to suggest how women empowered by third sector organizations contribute to creating sustainable and democratic society.

Globalization based on an open free market offers tremendous economic benefits in the world; however, only a small number of people get those benefits. For example, the income of the poor is 1/74 of that of the wealthy – and 70% of the poor are women (Oxfam, 2002; UNDP, 2003). It is estimated that 64% of illiterate adults in the world are women, the number amounts to 544 million (UNHDR, 2002). The number of countries having more than 0.8 score in GEM (Gender Empowerment Measure) is only 5 out of 70 target countries. That is, most of women are still positioned marginally although capital, culture and information is flowing worldwide.

How can this problem be tackled? Women’s participation is very important for a sustainable society because they contribute to protecting the environment, maintaining community life, and covering basic needs through for instance managing water resources, collecting fuel woods and raising children. In this panel, we will discuss how third sector organizations may contribute to the empowerment of women.

**CHARACTERISTICS and ABSTRACTS of PAPERS**

This panel consists of five papers, but two will not be presented in Barcelona. All

of them consider empowerment of women in the current globalized world not only by economic aspects but also by political and social aspects.

The first paper (Rekha Gaonkar, India) picks up women's organizations implementing advocacy work for women to improve working conditions, work-life balance and educational opportunities. How effective is their advocacy work? This paper examines the impact on excluded women and on society as a whole.

The second paper (Sujatha K.S., India), one of the two mentioned above, focuses on another solution to improve women's position: microfinance programs and self-help groups in India. This paper asks if, and if yes how microfinance programs empower women, highlights advantages and disadvantages of microfinance programs, and then considers effective management and governance systems for sustainability of self-help groups involved in microfinance programs.

The third paper (Eva Maria Hinterhuber, Germany) deals with civil society organizations in Russia working in the social sphere which have been established and are dominated by women. It examines not only the potential empowerment of women by being involved in social civil society organizations, but also the contribution of such women's civil society organizations to real democratization in Russia.

The fourth paper (Uday Kumar M.A., India), the second one which will not be presented in Barcelona, centers on the effects of globalization toward both men and women in India. Commercialization and capitalization of agriculture causes many suicides of male farmers and leaves the remaining women destitute. This paper examines the potential of third sector organizations as mental and financial supporters for these women.

The fifth paper (Laila Ottesen, Denmark) focuses on sports associations in Denmark and how 'global players' in sports commercialize sports in Denmark. She analyzes how the changes and challenges going along with development affect the empowerment of women in the formal voluntarily associations as well as gender differences in participation and how the voluntary manager and coaches try to cope with and adapt these challenges.

By covering these multiple topics, we will be able to grasp more accurately the effect of third sector organizations in empowering women, how men may profit from the empowerment of women and how this contributes to work for a sustainable society.

### **SIGNIFICANCE of DISCUSSION with INTERNATIONAL AUDIENCE**

This panel is one of three panels suggested by the Affinity Group on Gender officially recognized by ISTR. We think that this discussion will contribute to help understand how gender issues can be handled in the current world, in how far third sector organizations are involved and thus how important gender issues are in building a global civil society. In addition, this discussion will be helpful to ISTR members to get a “wider perspective” on globalization because two of our panelists cannot participate in this conference due to the funding problem; therefore, Laila Ottesen (Denmark) substituted for one absentee and presents her paper about how globalization challenges sports organizations, Danish traditional voluntary associations, and how they recover "civil power" in terms of gender participation. By adding experience in Denmark, typical welfare state, we can further learn how third sector organizations overcome traditional norms, customs and codes of behavior and empower women. Furthermore, we will prompt ISTR members to think about how to tackle “asymmetric globalization” and how to make it less asymmetric. As Anheier (2007) and Ezzat (2004) suggest, we need to think about how to achieve “social inclusion of marginalized people” with civility beyond national, religious and cultural differences.

## **Economic globalization and empowerment of women: A third sector perspective**

Author: Rekha Ramesh Gaonkar (India)

Economic Globalization refers to international integration of markets for goods, services and capital. It is a process of change towards global economic integration and a world economy characterized by liberation of trade and rapid diffusion of advanced technologies. Globalization has contributed in reshaping the identity and role of women. Their working conditions have changed. Before globalization the state, market and domestic realm were mediated by males. Whereas since the past two decades women have entered the workforce in almost all countries due to the development of the service sector.

However, studies have shown that the number of women in service sector has been varied across the world according to cultural context and according to age and marital status of women in specific societies. It is observed that the benefits or costs to women of opportunities opened up by globalization have varied according to a range of factors.

Highly educated and trained women have benefited more from expanding economic opportunities in almost all countries. There is also a rise of new employment opportunities for women in flexible and part time jobs due to the expanding service sectors of economies. It is found that women despite of increase in employment, continue to bear the burden of responsibilities of family .Though economic globalization has challenged to some extent the meaning and implications of gender constructs in specific societies, but women are paid low and are insecure in certain category of jobs.

Women are getting higher educational opportunities and better skills which enable them to get better paid jobs and also higher positions. But a large number of women are left out of the premises of higher educational institutions and training centers particularly due to higher fees. Women's organizations are concerned about the conditions of the women from marginalized sections of society and changing working conditions of women in this globalized world. They have been raising voices wherever

they could make a right impact.

This paper attempts to answer the question if and how the globalization has influenced economic empowerment of women in India from the third sector perspective. The study is based on both the primary and secondary data. Primary data is collected from some of the prominent NGOs in Goa, India.

**Women empowerment in the era of economic globalization:  
A study on performance and possibilities of self-help groups in India**

Author: Sujatha K.S. (India)

Self-Help Groups constitute a major segment among the third sector organizations in India. Though the concept of SHG is not new, the linking of it to microfinance is of recent origin. Significantly, the question of women empowerment has walked into the domain of the concept of SHGs and Microfinance in recent times. This, in turn, has added a major dimension enlarging the ongoing debates on economic globalization, development and women empowerment in India. Given this, divergent views have been expressed with regard to SHG and its role in development and empowerment of women. Generally, it has been widely acknowledged that economic development or empowerment need not necessarily result in socio-cultural development and empowerment of women due to existence of a large number of structural impediments, rigidities, and mediations that come in to play in any given socio-cultural and economic milieu. Suspicions are abounding as to the efficacy of micro-finance as a means for genuinely alleviating poverty and for women's empowerment in the growing context of economic globalization based on export-led growth and competitiveness. Consequently, it is important that the economic activities of self-help groups in delivering microfinance need to be examined in terms of a variety of issues, including their management and governance, concerning women empowerment. This study has attempted this on the basis of an empirical investigation in some districts of coastal Karnataka, India.

Against this backdrop, the study is taken up with the following specific research objectives:

- To find whether SHGs, through microfinance programme, have enabled women to empower themselves economically by engaging in income generating activities;

- To examine whether economic empowerment has further led to social, political and cultural empowerment of women;
- To know how the SHGs are managing and governing themselves;
- To evaluate the role of the SHG movement in becoming an effective social instrument to achieve the socio-economic development in general, and women empowerment in particular.

The paper is presented in three parts. The introductory part gives a brief outline of the major thrust of the study; provides a backdrop for the problem the researcher is investigating by highlighting the discourse on development in India in terms of its interconnection with the issues of women empowerment; and focuses on the issue and debate on rural development in the context of economic globalization. The second part presents and analyses the field data. The analysis includes a discussion on the working, management, governance, problems, and prospects of SHG movement in the study region. The final part cryptically presents a summary of the whole investigation, and highlights the impact of SHG movement on women empowerment in the study region. It also contains the critical reflections on the whole range of issues related to SHG movement and women empowerment in India.

#### Research Method

The paper is based on the primary data collected through field study of SHGs promoted by different credit dispensation linkages in two southwest coastal districts in India. Sample SHGs promoted by the State, Banks, NABARD, NGOs are selected for a detailed analysis of the issues raised above. The extensive discussions and interviews with SHG members and promoting agency officials are also used in the analysis and interpretation of data.

*Keywords:* Economic globalization, Gender inequality, marginalized women and empowerment, Third Sector, Self-Help Groups, and Management and Governance

## **On the road to a female ghetto or to empowerment?**

### **Women's voluntary engagement in CSOs in the social sphere in Russia**

Author: Eva Maria Hinterhuber (Germany)

From a perspective of feminist democratic theory, gender represents a Litmus test in regard to democratization processes. "Democracy minus women is no democracy", as the participants of the first All Russian Women Congress after the fall of the Soviet Union put it.

In the scientific mainstream, not only gender aspects, but also the contribution of civil society for democratic consolidation are often neglected. And even within third sector research, the political relevance of social civil society organizations is regularly questioned.

Arguing that, on the contrary, both gender and civil society are decisive factors within democratization processes, the paper examines the voluntary engagement of women in civil society organizations working in the social sphere in Russia.

Post-communist Russia experienced a severe backlash in gender relationships: Up till now, in comparison to the Soviet Union women almost vanished from institutional politics; they are severely underrepresented in leading positions in the new market economy; and they are confronted both with old and new forms of sexual violence.

Despite of these violations of their political, social and civic rights Russian women must not be seen solely as passive victims. That they are also actors, becomes particularly clear when looking at the still young civil society: Russia's civil society organizations are even dominated by women.

This is especially true for civil society organizations working in the social sphere. But how does the voluntary engagement of women in this field, which, not only in Russia, is traditionally ascribed to women, affect their position within the given gender regime? Is its result a female ghetto of low paid jobs, scarcely any appreciation, and little influence, at best supporting women in their daily struggle for better living conditions? Or, on the contrary, does it lead to their personal, social, political, legal, economic, and cultural

empowerment, and if yes, to what extent?

A qualitative answer to these questions has been sought within the framework of a case study. Therefore, five Russian social civil society organizations were selected, which are focussing in their work on health, poverty, age or/and unemployment by supporting handicapped or addicted persons, large families, the elderly, and jobless persons. Methodically, qualitative in-depth-interviews were accompanied by participating observation and text analysis (of documents published by and about the selected civil society organizations).

It could be shown, that the civic work of women in a traditionally female field does not, as it might be expected, primarily affirm the given gender regime, but instead leads to the empowerment of women. The examined social civil society organizations do not only prepare the material ground for participation. They also initiate processes of politicization, resulting in the aim to bring about societal change – not least in regard to gender. The paper also shows, that democratization in Russia has not taken place without women, and that the struggle for further democratization is not least fought by women.

**Feminization farmer suicides:  
Some reflection on the crisis in agrarian India in a globalizing era**

Author: Uday Kumar M.A. (India)

After the economic restructuring of the Indian economy, there has been a large-scale commercialisation of the primary sector (agriculture) in the country. This is evident from the transformation of agricultural sector into a capital intensive and high-risk activity. The low profiled poor farming community on the margins of the economy is being bulldozed by the advancement of capital in the so far self-sustainable, rural agricultural sector. Consequent to this, thousands of farmers are crushed by the increasing burden of debt, which many of the Indian farmers can hardly shoulder. It is disheartening to note that the suicide of the farmers in many of the Indian states is increasing. This is one of the greatest ill effects of the economic restructuring in the Indian economy, which calls for the immediate attention.

The problems, which push the farmers to suicide at increasing rate doesn't end with their suicide, it persists. The burden falls on the female members of the family. It is stunning to note that women are forced to head the family and own up responsibility that falls on their shoulders without opting for it. This is a clear case, which shows how women fall a prey to the process of commercialisation of agriculture resulted due to the globalisation of the Indian economy.

The cases reported from the states of Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamilnadu, brings to the light the severity of the problem arising due to Globalization of the Indian Economy and the farmer's suicide. Without much support from the state and the community, and in a resource-drained situation, how women struggle to keep the show going. Women affected by farmer suicides, may be provided psychological, economical, and financial support. Unless and otherwise these poor women get the attention they deserve and the support they are in need of, the rail of suicide may continue.

There is immediate need for the intervention of organisations to strongly represent the

case of this problem, as the victims are unable to represent it effectively. In situations like this, the TSO can play an important role. In this direction, the paper attempts to explore the possibilities of initiatives by the Third Sector Organization at different levels to reduce the intensity of problem on the farming community. The paper is based on the secondary data, and interviews with the state officials and researchers who have done field studies on farmer suicides. The objective of this paper is to bring the effect of feminization of Globalization in India to the discussion table of the academic community world over through ISTR.

## **The globalisation process as a challenge to the civil society and the empowerment of women in the voluntarily sports associations - in Denmark**

Author: Laila Ottesen (Denmark)

In this paper I will present a study about how the globalisation process challenge the civil society in Denmark e.g. the voluntarily sports associations in Denmark and the empowerment of women.

Denmark is one of Scandinavia's welfare states. The Scandinavian countries follow what may be characterised as "the social democratic welfare model". The Scandinavian "social democratic welfare model" refers to an institutionalised, universalistic welfare state in which the state plays a key role in the provision of welfare; only a small number of social services are administered by non-profit organisations and private-sector companies. Although we find a third sector with a wide range of formal organisations such as NGOs and more traditional voluntary associations, including sports clubs, here, it must be taken into consideration that sports clubs operating on the basis of voluntary work (belonging to the third sector) are traditionally the largest part of the third sector organisations and the most important providers of sport in Denmark. But this position is endangered by the globalisation from the with the (American) commercial fitness centres, the reorganisation of the welfare state (as an answer to globalisation) and the Danish reaction on the worldwide political focus on health.

From around the middle of the 1970s, sports participation in Denmark began to alter in character. More people began to practice sport, but an increasing number did so outside the traditional sports associations, making greater use of commercial fitness centres and/or municipally-funded evening classes in gymnastics and physical exercise. These changes in patterns of sports participation, together with an increasing focus on the importance of sport as a factor in preserving health (WHO's "Health for all by the year 2000"), as well as Denmark's ratification of the Council of Europe's "Sport For All" charter in 1972, led to criticism of the traditional public funding of association sports. The critics suggested that some resources in the area of sports should be distributed to

non-association sports practitioners. This was a policy that voluntary sports organisations on the one hand criticised, because it challenged the associations' monopoly on state and council funds and questioned their ability to realise the goals of "sport for all", while on the other hand, they attempted to adapt to these goals by creating health projects for so-called "sports-challenged" groups.

In the paper I will deal with and discuss what this challenges means for the associations and their democracy in general. And particularly reveal how these changes and challenges affect the empowerment of women in the formal voluntarily associations, the gender differences in participation and how the voluntary manager and coaches tries to cope with and adapt these challenges due to gender.