

**Women's Employment in the
Agro and Food Processing Sector:
South Asia and East Africa**

**Draft Report
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Introduction

The food processing industry is increasingly becoming an important sector in developing countries for its role in generating employment and attracting foreign investment. During the period 1980-91, the food industry (including tobacco and beverages) grew at a rate of 87% in developing nations (doubling in many Asian countries) compared to only 20% in developed countries. Moreover, this percentage is undoubtedly underestimated considering the large number of informal activities undertaken in this sector in developing countries. (ILO. 1998b).

The principal factor behind the impressive growth in developing countries was a combination of market liberalisation policies with an inexpensive and abundant supply of labour. Many multinational corporations were attracted by these favourable conditions and established part of their operations in the South. On the surface, the policies were successful in attracting foreign investment and creating employment opportunities. However, a closer examination reveals that this strategy has incurred considerable costs, particularly social ones.

Women, as a result of gender biases, are the cheapest source of labour and as such are multinationals' main employees (women represent 40% of the labour force in the food processing sector). The new jobs provided are low paying, require little skill and thus offer few opportunities for women to improve their economic, social and political situation. In addition to reinforcing gender inequities, this employment is also very unprotected. Globalisation of the world economy has enabled multinationals to quickly close down operations and re-locate in a different country. Not only are women unable to increase their skills and earn a fair wage, but the jobs they do obtain are liable to disappear without notice.

Multinationals have had an impact on women's employment in both the formal and informal sectors. In some cases, they have made distinguishing between the two sectors difficult. In the formal sector, multinationals establish factories to undertake a portion of the production process and employ women directly as wage earners. Women are also employed under sub-contracting arrangements outside the formal sector. This informal work can take place in women's homes (i.e. home-based or piece rate work) or in rented premises, for instance a contractor rents a shed and women work there on a piece rate or casual basis. This latter employment category blurs the line between the formal and informal sector since the formal, large-scale plant is contracting out part of the production process to an outside agent operating a small-scale enterprise in the informal sector.

Women's work in the informal sector has largely been unrecognised to the point where they have been considered "invisible" to data collectors and policy makers. This has led to a large segment of the population falling through the cracks with respect to national planning and macro decision making. This is very concerning given the informal sector's rapid growth and women's increasing entry into it. Women in the 'informal' sector are the most vulnerable, and often times the least able, to control the decisions affecting their lives and livelihoods.

An additional element that has contributed to informal sector growth and women's increasing entry into the marketplace is the impact of structural adjustment policies. This is particularly evident in Africa. Massive public sector downsizing, privatisation and reductions in social expenditures (e.g. health and education) have resulted in general inflation, food price increases and greater reliance on export crops. Faced with these pressures, women must enter the market place to earn income to cover basic household needs. Due to their limited skills, education, access to support services and/or social constraints, women's employment is primarily in the informal sector. Similar to the globalisation and market liberalisation scenario, women's informal employment is

unsecured; threatened by men who are entering into previously female domains in response to stagnant formal sectors. The end result being women are squeezed out of employment opportunities from below (e.g. small scale and/or traditional areas) and above (e.g. structural adjustment).

The following paper will address several issues related to women in the informal agro and food processing sectors. In Part One, an overview of the agro and food processing industries in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya will be discussed. The first section highlights where past research and programming efforts have focused, followed by the main agro and food products in each country and the nature of women's involvement. Both formal and informal sectors will be considered in this section since the two are not always easily separated. Part Two considers the potential impacts of globalisation on women and the food processing sector. This is followed by areas for intervening to improve women's chances of taking advantage of globalisation. The final sections present key findings and avenues for further research.

1. Overview

1.1 Main Areas of Research and Programming

Research and programming in the area of women's employment has evolved considerably over the past three decades. In the 1970s, efforts mainly centred on women's role as agricultural producers (this is particularly true in Africa). Female employment projects during this period were mainly welfare motivated and focused on developing traditional skills to enable women to work part time to supplement household incomes.

By the early 1980s, experience indicated that the market approach (i.e. income generating activities) was failing to address gender barriers in society. Even though women were earning some income, labour market discrimination prevented them from entering non traditional (male) employment. It became obvious that although women's ability generate income was improving, their access to employment and equity were not. The UN Decade for Women (1976-85) highlighted the need to further integrate women into poverty alleviation programmes by emphasising the link between women's ability to earn income and reducing household poverty. Reflecting the UN's findings, several NGOs responded and began integrating women's employment into their poverty projects as opposed to separating them. Unfortunately, at the same time many international development organisations were shifting their attention away from poverty reduction programmes to macro level development instead.

Research and programming in the 1990s have witnessed a new approach that incorporates many of the issues from the previous decade: the empowerment approach to women's employment. This strategy aims to combine economic empowerment with a reduction (if not elimination) of gender barriers to enable women to participate fully and equitably in society. Generally speaking, it emphasises a grassroots, holistic and female solidarity approach to improving women's well-being (economic, social and political).¹ This approach is the main focus for the remainder of this paper; the assumption being that improving women's lives requires economic and socio-political empowerment through top-down and bottom up strategies. For example, combining policy advocacy activities with grassroots initiatives targeted at increasing poor women's income opportunities.

¹ The reader is encouraged to see Mayoux (1995) article "From Vicious to Virtuous Circles? Gender and Micro-Enterprise Development" for further discussion on the evolution of women's employment programmes.

Women's informal employment in the agro and food processing sector will be the focal point in the following discussion.

Agro/Food processing is considered a traditional activity and as such many women are involved in this sector as unpaid family members, home-based (or piece rate) workers and self-employed. Women's vulnerability to market liberalisation policies, structural adjustment programmes (e.g. privatisation and downsizing the public sector) and globalisation has increased the attention they have received in the past few years. Broadly speaking, women's employment opportunities are constrained by their limited resource base and society. A limited resource base refers to women's lower education levels and literacy, fewer skills and restricted access to productive resources (e.g. land, raw materials, credit). The second element refers to the gender constraints that exist in society. For example, perceptions regarding "women's work" and its worth as well as religious practices that require women to remain in the home. These two factors are inter-related and influence one another considerably. For instance, gender biases prevent women and girls from fully benefiting from available educational opportunities and/or developing the necessary skills to enter male dominated professions. As stated in the introduction, these constraints frequently relegate women to unskilled, low paying jobs that offer little security and contribute to their high participation in the informal sector.

Opinion appears to be divided regarding how to examine the role of women in the agro/food processing sector. Applying research results and translating them into programming to improve women's lives is constrained by fragmented and unreliable data consisting of different definitions of women's economic activity and the informal sector. Much of the research with respect to women engaged in food processing activities is limited and localised to micro surveys or case studies of specific sectors (e.g. shrimp or dairy processors in India or female market traders in Nairobi). This paper is no exception and faces similar limitations.

The methods by which research should approach women's employment is equally divided. Disagreement abounds regarding whether the formal and informal sector can be separated given the two are often interdependent and/or created by the other's existence. For example, formal large-scale enterprises subcontract processing work to smaller informal units to take advantage of preferential policies.

The nature of some informal activities is such that a female producer may decide to allot her labour time to an alternative income earning activity (e.g. mat making instead of beer brewing) if she determines that demand from the local market insufficient that season or too many people are engaged in the same activity. Flexibility is one reason why the informal market is attractive to many women. It allows them to respond to the given market conditions and alter their income strategies as needed. Thus, a compilation of women's various informal activities may reveal more information and potential opportunities than isolating a specific sub sector (or activity). Longitudinal time series research will determine if women are engaged in a bundle of informal activities. If this is the case, programming should be flexible and target informal activities that are feasible in a given location or marketplace. Clearly, the bundle theory above relates mainly to products with domestic market demand and locations where women have alternative activities available. It is not likely to apply to the most disadvantaged women whose options are considerably limited.

It is also important to determine women's motivations for entering the informal market (i.e. voluntary or survival mechanism). Authors such as Raju (1993) and Manuh (1998) refer to this as the duality of female employment. Some women chose to leave the household to train and generate income whereas other women must leave as part of a household survival strategy. The needs of the two groups are not necessarily the same. For example, small business training courses or providing credit for the purchase bulk raw

materials may be more responsive to the needs of a self-employed female enterprise (e.g. traders or vendors). Alternatively, self-employed women who enter the market place on a temporary basis in response to outside pressures may not be interested in becoming entrepreneurs. If this is the case, providing short term credit to cover unexpected family expenses (e.g. medical and education costs) or increasing access to a common property resource to collect food or fuel might be better responses to women's immediate requirements and eliminate the need for them to enter the market place unwillingly. Research will assist programmers determine female individual enterprise/workers' characteristics, motivations for entering the labour force and immediate needs and in response, programmes can be designed accordingly (while keeping in mind that food processing activities may only be one part of a diversified income earning approach).

1.2 Agro and Food Processing in South Asia and East Africa

The following discussion incorporates women's agro processing and food processing activities into its analysis. Agro-processing is defined generally as the post harvest processing of agricultural crops whereas food processing is defined as bakery or cooked food, soft drinks and beer brewing, roasting meat, processed fruit and vegetables, pickles, home made jellies and other food related products and services. The justification for including both topics is due to the considerable variation that exists between South Asia and East Africa; isolating one activity risks overlooking a large portion of women's labour time.

Agriculture remains an important sector for both South Asia and East Africa and continues to provide the highest percentage of male and female employment. In East Africa it represents the main contributor to GDP and employs 75% to 85% of the populations in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. In South Asia, agriculture's share of employment is somewhat less (65% in India and Bangladesh and only 47% in Pakistan) with employment dispersed among the manufacturing (mainly textiles) and services sectors.

Agro-processing is the responsibility of many rural women in East Africa and is especially relevant as many governments maintain their focus on exporting raw agricultural products to earn foreign exchange. In addition to serving domestic needs, women's traditional responsibility for post harvest processing adds value to crops. In the past, neglecting to include their processing role has contributed to the failure of extension services and programmes to improve rural lives (notably the lives of women).

Compared to South Asia, the manufacturing food processing sector in East Africa is not as developed. In fact, as South Asia's manufacturing industries were growing, East Africa's were shrinking as a result of two decades of structural adjustment policies, civil unrest (e.g. Uganda) and pressure from globalisation. These factors contributed to declining foreign investment in Africa's manufacturing industries and promotion of national policies supporting primary agricultural crop exports (i.e. cash crops).

This is not to say informal food processing activities are not important and will not be considered with respect to East Africa. Rather, it would be amiss to omit agro-processing from any discussion regarding women and food production. Agro-processing occupies a considerable amount of African women's time and contributes to the economy. Conversely, the food processing sector must also be included as it may provide potential lessons for East Africa. South Asia's food processing industry (formal and informal) has been growing rapidly and adding new dimensions to women's involvement in agro and food processing. For this reason, the issues related to women's agro as well as food processing activities will be explored in this paper.

The next sections will examine the main agricultural and food products in South Asia (India, Bangladesh and Pakistan) and East Africa (Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya) followed by the nature of women's involvement in processing the products. As stated earlier, available data regarding the informal sector and women's involvement is fragmented and often limited to micro level case studies. Therefore, the information in the following sections draws upon a variety of sources at different time periods and is not easily comparable across countries or products. Furthermore, where information does exist it is unlikely that an initial gender baseline survey was undertaken to determine the progression (if any) of women's informal activities (e.g. a temporary or permanent entry into the labour market, altered power relationships between men and women, increased incomes and how was money spent?). Without such a survey, the data only represents a snapshot of women's informal employment at a particular moment in time.

1.2.1 Main Products in South Asia

Main Food Products in India

The food processing sector is very important to India's national economy and represents 10% of total exports (of which 35% was rice and 37% fish). India's food processing industry is well developed and characterised by a diverse industrial base that includes both small and large scale enterprises. The industry's expansion has been greatly assisted by domestic demand from a large middle class and the creation of a separate ministry, the Ministry of Food Processing Industries, to facilitate foreign investment. The Ministry categorises the country's main food product sub-sectors as: fruit and vegetable processing (mainly small scale, cottage sector); fish processing (export potential); milk and milk product processing; meat and poultry processing (production is mainly in the informal sector); packaging and convenience foods and grain milling.

Nature of Women's Involvement in India

Overall, agriculture remains by far the largest informal sector activity for women in India. A 1983-84 National Sample Survey (NSS) estimated that approximately 95% of rural and 75% of urban women in India were engaged in the informal sector (World Bank, 1991:92). In the rural areas, women are employed both as wage workers and own-farm workers in the agriculture sector.

Considerable regional variation exist with respect to the nature of women's labour activities and sectoral allocation in India. Central to the regional differences in women's employment is an inside/outside dichotomy in the country that associates prestige with keeping women inside the home (i.e. the religious practice of purdah). The "inside" dichotomy is stronger in the wheat producing Northern India where women practice purdah more rigidly, literacy rates are lower and fertility higher as compared to the rice producing South. For example, Northern provinces represent only 3% of the country's female wage labourers compared to 16% in the Southern state of Andhra Pradesh (this is also due to land holding families in the North relying upon family workers to a greater degree as opposed to hiring outside labourers). Generally, women wage workers predominate in the South and East and women cultivators predominate in most of the Northern and Western States.

Along with religious practices, caste, tribe and household incomes also affect female participation rates. Scheduled caste and scheduled tribe women have higher participation rates as do landless households (women in the latter group are three times more likely to work as wage earners). Thus, religious, social and land constraints must be addressed with respect to women's employment in the Northern states. Research from the early 1990s found that demand for female wage labour was increasing as a

result of modern agricultural technologies (e.g. irrigation, bio-chemical HYV technologies, but not mechanical threshers and other types of mechanisation). (World Bank. 1991: 22-33). Additional information is necessary to determine the impact of agricultural technology on rural women since this time, as well as capture any provincial variations regarding women's involvement. The earlier research seems to indicate that women may be entering the labour force as agricultural wage earners because their families (or themselves) have no land and they require additional income (i.e. as part of a household survival strategy) but this is unconfirmed.

Sub-sector information regarding women's involvement in both rural and urban informal sectors is patchy at best. The dated National Survey Sample (NSS) found that only 17% urban women participated in the labour force versus 39% of rural women (World Bank. 1991:92). It is highly likely that this percentage has changed drastically considering the data is 15 years old (whether or not both percentages have increased, dropped or equalised is uncertain). Assuming variations still exist between the two groups, women in urban areas may be facing greater constraints (i.e. education, literacy, non traditional skills and mobility requirements) which prevent them from entering the formal labour market. Thus, it is most likely that they are undertaking informal activities that are not captured by official statistics.

Again, regional disparities indicate different factors may be affecting women's employment in urban areas and the nature of their involvement (i.e. home-based, wage workers or self employed). Information across a variety of sectors indicates that home-based female workers are paid the least in India, whereas self-employed women appear to earn the most (particularly when they have access to credit, inputs, extension services, etc.). Once again regional differences arise with respect to the nature of women's involvement. Older estimates from the late 1980s regarding the percentage of women who are self-employed in the urban informal sector vary from 70% in Faridabad, 13% in Bangalore and 10% in Calcutta. (World Bank. 1991:99).

All this being said, the nature of women's involvement in the food processing sector can be gathered from a variety of case studies, including the West Bengal prawn industry by Banerjee (1991), the dairy sector (World Bank. 1991) and an earlier 1983 survey of the shrimp, pickle, masala and papad sectors in the Bombay area (Desai and Gopalan in Baud. 1987).

The frozen prawn industry in West Bengal is considered a luxury export product. Banerjee's 1991 examination of the sector found that women (mainly Kerala) worked as cleaners, graders and packed prawns in processing sheds. Women were employed on a casual basis and worked only 10 days a month (coinciding with full and new moon harvesting) whereas the men who cleaned the sheds received salaries for the entire season. Women working in the firms surveyed were estimated to have claimed no more than 20% of the value added through processing, even though owners stated that their role in the production process was very important (as contamination or improper grading could lead to a reduced price or rejection of the firm's quota). (Banerjee. 1991:243-250).

Dairy production in India is primarily an rural informal activity and is often missed by national statistics due to its part time nature. This sector has grown considerably in India in response to increasing domestic demand. The livestock management and dairy production sector are comprised predominantly of women (anywhere from 85% to 93% of labour share are female) from Andhra Pradesh, landless women and those from other farms are all involved in livestock production. (World Bank. 1991:47-48).

A study of the shrimp industry 16 years ago by Desai and Gopalan's (1983) found two production units were utilised: pre-processing sheds and freezing plants. Gender was highly segregated in each unit. Women were employed as wage earners on a casual basis as cleaners/peelers in pre-processing sheds and graders/packing in the freezing

plants (men loaded and cleaned in the latter unit). In the pickle, masala and papad industries, women were employed as home-based workers to peel and pound the ingredients prior to further processing. Gender segregation in the pickle and masala industry was minimal and each worker carried out all tasks in a group. The only exception noted was machine processing which was carried out by men, leaving women with access to two thirds of the functions in the industry (pre-processing and packing). (Baud. 1987: 74-83). Gender dynamics in the shrimp industry have conceivably changed since Desai and Gopalan's study as this product's export potential has been encouraged by the government.

Baud (1987) found that the production methods in the pickle, masala and papad sub-sectors continued even as the industries expanded towards exporting. This is likely due this sub-sector being reserved for manufacturing by small scale enterprises by the Indian government. As stated in the introduction to this section, India's industrial sector includes both small and large-scale enterprises and the main explanation for this occurring is because the government has reserved several food items for production solely in the small sector. Although this has protected many small enterprises from having to compete with large plants, it has contributed considerably to sub-contracting activities in the Indian economy. Many larger plants take advantage of this preferential treatment by splitting up production processes and contracting them out to smaller units. For example, pickles, chutney, ground and processed spice products are reserved for exclusive manufacture in the small sector. As illustrated by the previous case study, women are employed to work from their homes under sub-contracting arrangements (also known as the putting-out system) to prepare the spices or vegetables for further processing. Baud's (1987) study found that sub-contracting was applied on either a contractor or individual basis and any attempts establish unions increased the extent of subcontracting.

Main Food Products in Pakistan

A UNIDO industrial review in 1990 found that food products (including beverages) represented approximately one third of Pakistan's total gross industrial output value and manufacturing value added. The country's main food products were vegetable ghee, cooking oil, sugar, soft drinks and non-alcoholic beverages. Food products on the rise were processed fruit products exports and biscuit production for both domestic and export markets. Private sector enterprises were largely focused on the cooking oil sector while the sugar industry consisted of both traditional small-scale enterprises producing lump (gur) and brown sugar (shakkar) and large-scale modern plants. UNIDO identified Pakistan's food industry as having considerable growth potential for both domestic consumption and export. Specific future avenues include addressing a considerable supply gap in the beverages industry (e.g. juices), improving cane sugar extraction in the small scale sectors (50% extracted compared to 80% in larger plants) and increasing milk products' value added by combining fruits and vegetables with milk products to produce baby food. (UNIDO. 1990:47-53).

Nature of Women's Involvement In Pakistan

In the agriculture sector, women produce mainly for home consumption and any surplus is marketed by male relatives who keep the income. The inside/outside dichotomy that was previously discussed within the context of Northern India is noticeably in operation in Pakistan where men's and women's activities are highly separated. Specific women's agro processing activities include extracting oil from seeds, cleaning cotton, drying mango pulp, drying/husking/grinding corn, wheat, pulses or rice into flour and peeling the tops of sugarcane for animal fodder. Women's responsibility for grinding maize, millet, sorghum, etc., for home consumption is the most labour intensive task. (World Bank. 1989:89). Women are also primarily involved in small livestock, fruit and vegetables cultivation while men grow wheat and rice (with some assistance from women).

Approximately 70% of men and women are estimated to be working in Pakistan's urban informal sector. Of the estimated 25% women (aged 10 years and above) who participate in the urban labour market, 20.3% (or about 2 million women) are estimated to be working in the informal sector. The majority of women in the urban informal sector are poor and unskilled (as is the case for the other countries discussed in this paper) but, reflecting Pakistan's norms of female seclusion, their informal activities are concentrated in home-based activities. Home-based work employed 1.5 million women in 1986. This amount was split evenly between women in piece rate employment and self-employed in family enterprises (i.e. a scenario whereby women produce and male relatives sell the products). A 1987 micro survey in Karachi found 76.7% women were engaged in home-based activities (22 out of 247 were processing food) and the remaining 23.3% in outside home activities (7 out of 75 were food vendors). (World Bank. 1989:92). Only 2% of the total labour force in trade and commerce were female. (Boserup. 1989:88). Considering the fact that these figures are at least 10 years old, they are likely to have changed. Moreover, the initial percentages may be underestimated given the prevalence of home-based workers and the generally unknown nature of this type of female employment.

Although trade (mainly vendors) represented a small portion of women's informal activities in Pakistan during the late 1980s, it was increasing. Seclusion practices were respected as female vendors arrived in groups and traded in special sections of markets or venues, such as Friday Juma Bazaars and markets located near shrines. Female traders were reported to earn a relatively high income for the urban informal sector (e.g. Rs. 100 to Rs. 2,000 daily in 1988). Their main trading activities being selling vegetables, spices, processed and semi-processed food items primarily to other women. (World Bank. 1989:97). It would be interesting to determine if this trend continued and if so, what are the needs, constraints and characteristics of self-employed women in Pakistan's urban areas.

Main Products in Bangladesh

The main agricultural products in Bangladesh are rice, jute, tea, wheat, sugarcane, potatoes, beef, milk and poultry. Rice remains the most important commodity and frozen seafood (e.g. fish and shrimp) is also a valuable manufacturing export for the country.

Nature of Women's Involvement in Bangladesh

The majority of Bangladesh's population is concentrated in rural areas (about 80%) and agriculture represents the main occupation for both men and women. Approximately, 43% of women are involved in agricultural activities, primarily as unpaid family labourers. Women's activities are generally confined to the home (again, this is on account of the practice of purdah) and they are responsible for post harvest operations such as preparing the threshing floor, threshing, beating, parboiling, drying, husking, winnowing, seiving and storage. Conversely, men are engaged with outside activities such as ploughing the land, purchasing inputs and selling products. Begum (1989) estimated that approximately 25% of the rice crop's was attributed to women's post harvest work. (Begum. 1989: 520-521). This figure has presumably dropped since 1989 due to the spread of rice mills in Bangladesh having replaced women's processing role. Other traditional female food processing activities include livestock care, poultry, fish and fruit preservation.

Agriculture's high proportion of employment, combined with a growing number of landless people, has contributed to a rising number of people engaging in rural non-farm income activities. Women's participation in the labour force is increasing faster than that of men's (although poverty not opportunity could be driving women into the labour force) and it is estimated that approximately 8 million women in Bangladesh are seeking employment.

Women's employment in Bangladesh's garment industry is generally well documented whereas information pertaining to women working in the manufactured food processing industry is sparse. The export shrimp manufacturing industry is a main employer of women and manufacturing units in export processing zones prohibit workers from forming trade unions. (Government of Bangladesh. 1997). Additional information regarding the working conditions, wages, activities, backgrounds (e.g. educated, skilled or otherwise) and women's motivation for entering the export shrimp sector would be beneficial in determining the characteristics of female employees in Bangladesh's export food processing sectors and why the government feels it is necessary to ban unions.

1.2.2 Main Products in East Africa

Agriculture is the primary sector employing women in East Africa: 85.3% of economically active women in Kenya; 91.1% in Tanzania and 88.4% in Uganda (FAO. 1990 figures). In all three East African countries, the percentage of women employed in the agricultural sector outnumbers men. Unlike South Asia, women are occupied to larger degree in the production chain in East Africa and face fewer religious restrictions. Manuh (1998) states that African women are responsible for 70% of food production, 50% domestic food storage, 100% food processing, 50% animal husbandry and 60% of agricultural marketing. For example, women in rural Uganda typically prepare the soil, plant, weed and harvest crops and are extensively involved in market trade.

Furthermore, as previously discussed in Section 1.2, structural adjustment policies and a shrinking manufacturing base are important elements to remember when considering agro/food processing and the informal sector in East Africa. These issues play a large role in motivating (or forcing) women to join the informal sector as part of a survival strategy in response to inflation, a reduction in real wages and men's decreasing ability to maintain household incomes.

Main Products in Uganda

Many of Uganda's agro-production and processing activities were disrupted by internal disturbances in 1972 when President Amin expelled the country's Asian population and a period of civil unrest ensued. These events virtually shut down production until the early 1980s. The upheaval from this period, combined with falling world commodities prices affecting coffee, livestock, sugar, tea, oilseeds, has seriously affected the manufacturing and agricultural sectors in Uganda. As of the mid 1990s, the Ugandan manufacturing sector contributed approximately 5% to GDP per annum and still did not have the ability to export. Food processing followed the tobacco and beverages sector in terms of total share of industrial production.

Uganda's main agro-processing industries are listed as dairy (particularly rural cooling centres), maize mills, cotton ginning, oil extraction for cotton seed, sunflower and soya beans, feed mills and coffee bean processing. (ILO. 1998a:5). An earlier study of the agro processing sector by the World Bank in 1996 added sugar and jaggery, meat and fish to the list. (World Bank. 1996:138). The fisheries sector is an important industry with considerable export potential even though Uganda is landlocked. Catches have been increasing steadily over the past decade. Specific employment information concerning the fisheries sector is out-of-date: a survey from 1988 estimated that approximately 150,000 people were involved in fisheries processing, marketing and transporting. Unfortunately, gender distributions were not considered in this early study. More recent information from the mid 1990s confirms that Uganda's fisheries sector operates chiefly in the informal sector and employs traditional methods (e.g. fish drying). (UNIDO. 1995:49-54).

Nature of Women's involvement in Uganda

As stated earlier, the agriculture sector has been attempting to make up for lost ground since the 1970s. So far, it has not reached 1960s production levels and per capita food production has been dropping in the past 20 years. Inefficient inputs, technology and equipment (e.g. hoe/matchette) are still being employed which, according to a recent employment report by the ILO (1998a), is increasing women's burden on rural farms. Women produce almost all of the food crops and about 60% of Uganda's cash crops while they only sell approximately 30% of food crops and 9% of cash crops. The main cash crops women are involved with include coffee and cotton and more recently, sesame, maize and beans. (ILO. 1998a).

Provision of credit information and rural marketing infrastructure are inadequate and represent critical areas for intervening to improve rural incomes and generate employment. Improving agricultural production and the application of appropriate technology would conceivably reduce the burden rural women are facing and promote food security. Localised studies are essential to assess what inputs, technology, extension services, etc., are needed and how they should be introduced and applied.

The same ILO report mentioned above (1998a) found that non-farm activities (considered as informal activities) are also important to Uganda's rural population. This is not surprising since food production levels have been dropping, underemployment is high and poverty is extensive. Rural people are engaged in many different activities to generate additional income for survival purposes. Resource based activities are the primary source of non-farm income (e.g. beer brewing, maize milling, oil extraction and fish processing) and most informal enterprises are individual enterprises (i.e. self-employed).

Informal small scale enterprises in Uganda are the least studied sector. Information is especially fragmented to non-existent regarding women's informal activities. A gender breakdown of the above rural non-farm activities was not considered in the ILO report. Previous studies in the fish processing sector found that rural women are responsible for preservation (i.e. smoking, drying and salting) and selling their food products. More recent information regarding women's involvement in the other activities is either non-existent or has not been disseminated. Rural demand for smoked fish, edible oils and dairy products is said to be high, but additional market information is needed to confirm this and determine how women engaged in informal activities can potentially take advantage of this information if it is true.

Urban informal sector employment has been estimated as growing at a per annum rate of 5.6% (compared to 1% in the formal sector). (UNIDO. 1994:31). Older information collected by the National Manpower Survey in 1989 estimated that the urban informal sector employed approximately 13.7% of the urban labour force as compared to 5.4% employed in the formal sector (ILO. 1998a:6). The percentage of people engaged in informal activities has presumably increased over the past decade since the Manpower survey, given further retrenchments in the public and private sectors.

Informal food processing enterprises are primarily small-scale and cater to domestic demand from low income Ugandans. Food processing, defined as maize milling, bakery and related products, beer brewing and other food processing and related activities, represents 9.94% of urban Uganda's informal sector activities. Trade and restaurants comprise 40.2% of urban informal activities and includes serving food, drinks, meals in small restaurants, selling food items such as roasted meat, corn, beer, charcoal, firewood, newspapers, etc., in stalls, kiosks, markets and hawking. Both men and women are involved in street vending and hawking and it is generally believed that the majority are self-employed and operating individual enterprises. Women's urban trading activities include selling fruit and vegetables, dried fish, meat and cooked food (sometimes to offices and small restaurants) and their profit is estimated to be 20%.

The ILO study of Uganda highlighted several issues that require addressing with respect to women engaged in informal activities. The foremost issues include: generating in-depth statistical and qualitative data on women's role, working conditions, employment status and constraints in both the rural and urban informal sectors; increasing women's control over and ownership of resources (i.e. through provision of credit, training, cash, education, information and extension services) and lastly, providing market infrastructure for female street vendors and hawkers (i.e. hygienic work areas with electricity, toilets and protection from bad weather, along with measures to reduce harassment from authorities). Female street vendors and hawkers are said to be one of the most disadvantaged groups operating in Uganda's urban informal sector. (ILO. 1998a)

Opportunities for employment in the public and private sectors are limited for both men and women alike and has contributed greatly to large proportion of people working in the urban informal sector. Women are limited from entering the formal sector on account of their lower status, education and health levels (long term result of malnutrition). Moreover, increasing competition threatens their employment in the informal sector in view of recent retrenched civil servants (est. 170,000) and demobilised soldiers (50,000) who have recently entered the labour market searching for income earning activities.

Main Products in Tanzania

In Tanzania, the food industry is comprised of primary agricultural processing of sugar, beer, cigarettes and sisal twine. Agricultural products include coffee, tea, corn, wheat, cassava, fruits and vegetables and meat. As is the case in Uganda, the processed fish industry is also on the increase in Tanzania.

The ILO estimates that urban informal sector in Tanzania provides approximately 56% of total urban employment. (ILO. 1999). Men dominate as urban food traders and wholesalers in the country (i.e. they represent at least 75% of both activities). This is likely due to Islamic tradition of men controlling manufacturing and commerce. Women are increasingly joining the informal sector due to falling household incomes and male unemployment. These women are mainly self-employed (e.g. 60% in Dar es Salaam) and sell fruits, vegetables, cakes, etc., in the streets. A study from 1992 by Tripp (in Messkoub. 1996) found that upper and middle class women earned at least 10 times more than poorer women. The reasons why were cited as increased access to capital and better knowledge, suggesting that poorer women are seriously constrained from improving their productivity because of a limited resource base (e.g. credit, inputs and equipment) and lack of extension services (e.g. training, market information, basic education).

Once again, similar to Uganda, there are a number of people engaged in off-farm (or non-farm) rural informal activities in Tanzania. A 1993 study estimated that approximately 64% of Tanzania's rural population was engaged in some form of informal non-agricultural activity. A national survey by the Government of Tanzania two years earlier in 1991 stated that the informal sector as a whole contributes approximately 32% of national GDP. (Seppala. 1998: 234-5). More recent information regarding the size and degree of women's involvement in the rural and urban informal sectors is limited to micro surveys.

Seppala's 1998 examination of four villages in the Lindi district in Southern Tanzania is a more recent study of rural non-farm activities. This region was selected since it contributes the greatest number of informal traders in Dar es Salaam. It was found that the primary informal food processing activities in the villages were selling grain beer, local soft drinks, doughnuts, root snacks and cooked food. Women were highly engaged in the production and sale of beer and this was a major informal activity (except in Islamic villages). Female domination in beer brewing is unsurprising as it is considered a traditional female activity (e.g. pounding the grain, water and fuel collection and cooking

on three stones). Seppala stressed the fact these informal activities were seasonal, taking place during lulls in agriculture, and that gender division of labour or activities is not strict (both men and women will engage in similar activities).

Main Products in Kenya

In Kenya, the main agricultural products are coffee, tea, corn, wheat, sugarcane, fruit/vegetables, dairy products, beef, pork, poultry, eggs. Many of Kenya's agricultural products are sold to larger, international marketing companies or processors (e.g. green beans, high value fruit, vegetables). (Joeke. 1995). Fish production is also on the increase but may slow down due to ecological problems with Lake Victoria.

Nature of Women's involvement in Kenya

Women outnumber men in the rural areas and they are the primary agriculture cultivators in Kenya. Women's prominent role in agricultural production is based upon the tradition that men clear the land while women prepare the soil, plant, tend and harvest it. Food crops are the focus of female cultivators, whereas men are involved with export crops. Similar to Uganda, declining agricultural productivity and decreasing household incomes has increased the number of women who engage in rural non-farm informal activities for their families' survival. Women are also engaged in fish processing and trading in the areas surrounding Lake Victoria (approximately 75% of women are working in the artisanal fishing sector). (IDRC. Web site).

Women's role as food producers is not limited to rural areas. Recent studies illustrate that women who move to urban areas have continued producing subsistence food crops. Women began urban gardens as part of a household survival strategy in response to inflation and their husband's insecure employment situation. The plots of land are located in public spaces or vacant lots and any surplus from the gardens is sold by the women (occasionally, the products are prepared and sold as a meal).

The term informal market was coined in Kenya during an ILO mission in 1972. The urban *jua kali* sector was estimated to contribute approximately 20% to total urban output in 1985 (Freeman. 1991:14). Later data suggest that the sector has been growing in recent years and accounted for approximately 53.4% of all employment. Women are engaged primarily in petty trading and are self-employed.

The impact of structural adjustment policies have contributed to an interesting situation in East Africa: the increase of non-farm informal activities in rural areas and rural informal activities in urban areas. This challenges past assumptions that the informal sector is predominantly an urban phenomenon and presents a new dynamic when examining women's employment in informal activities. Additional information is necessary to identify the various issues affecting women engaged in rural food processing informal activities verses women in urban food processing activities and to determine if there are opportunities for linking the two groups together for mutual benefit (e.g. female agro producers with urban food hawkers). Although, the number of rural non-farm informal activities have increased rapidly in East Africa, it should also be kept in mind that it is also a growing sector in South Asia (particularly Bangladesh).

Part two of this discussion considers the impact of globalisation on women's employment. As stated in the introduction, this process has led to an increasing number of women entering the labour market and has added a new dimension to women's employment. While at the same time, it has highlighted many issues that are not new, such as women's limited resource base and low status.

2. Globalisation

Globalisation represents a new phase in the organisation of the world economy. Advancements in communications and transportation combined with trade liberalisation and increased capital mobility have facilitated the globalisation process. It is essentially firm driven and composed of large multinational corporations that are able to establish their operations and production bases in any location in the world. The highly volatile nature of these firms and their ability to quickly pick up and relocate leaves employees and nations in a precarious position. Developing countries are particularly at risk since many firms undertake part of their production process in the South, attracted by low wage workers and an often unregulated labour market. Globalisation is the main contributor to the increase in sub-contracting and home-based work and as such is one of the driving forces behind the growth of the informal sector in many countries.

Self-employed women operating informal individual enterprises are also implicated by globalisation and market liberalisation policies. There is the risk that their predominantly domestic consumers will prefer the new foreign produced imports instead of the informal goods. Globalisation and trade liberalisation increase competition for small informal sector enterprises and lead to increasing demand for higher quality goods, standards and access to new skills. Informal enterprises are limited by their small resource bases and mainly cater to low income domestic consumers. Improving the quality of products, packaging and identifying new products can assist self-employed women compete with new imports from trade liberalisation. Productivity must also improve if women are to generate more income, access greater opportunities and compete.

In spite of the fact that globalisation is a relatively new phenomenon, it has displayed some trends. Joekees (1995) identified two main stages of manufacturing export growth in developing countries. Initially, production of clothing, foot ware and processed food represent a country's main exports. Assuming diversification takes place, this eventually leads to the production of micro-circuits and electrical products. Women were the primary employees in both stages and in order to expand to the second stage, labour productivity had to be increased and developed from low skilled to highly skilled and knowledgeable. Therefore, based on past trends, if women are to take advantage of future opportunities in the manufacturing export sector they will require training and skill development.

Considerable caution is advised with respect to transferring past events into future planning; the uncertain nature of globalisation, combined with rapid technological growth, are creating new circumstances with every passing year, making it difficult to forecast future directions. In any case, developing women's capacities to overcome any constraints they face in the labour market (and society) and take advantage of new markets (domestic or international) remains a sensible direction to take. The next section examines various areas for intervening in women's lives to improve their economic and socio-political circumstances.

2.1.1 Gender and Globalisation

Female workers are considerably affected by the globalisation process both positively and negatively. On the one hand, foreign firms supply job opportunities to women where none might have existed otherwise, break down social barriers and provide an entry point for women into the labour market. In many instances, these opportunities are in new areas and therefore are not male dominated. Moreover, it is easier to redistribute access to knowledge and skills than land and accumulated wealth. (Keller-Herzog. 1996). Unfortunately, multinationals' practices have frequently been exploitative and reinforced negative stereotypes with respect to women workers. Corporations are said to prefer

female workers because they are perceived to be more docile, submissive and less costly than men.

There are a number of factors that contribute to the potentially negative impact of globalisation and each represents an area for intervening to enable women to capture greater benefits. The underlying problem is that issues such as globalisation, market liberalisation and privatisation are gender blind and assume women and men enter the market on a level playing field. This is not the case. The primary reasons why women fail to benefit from globalisation and often lose out relate to their limited resource base, technology, the production process and women's lower status in society.

A limited resource base refers to women's lower levels of education, literacy, skills and knowledge, as well as their minimal or no access to land, credit, training, extension services, etc. These issues relegate women's employment opportunities to unskilled, or traditional skilled, low paying work. Limited resources prevent wage workers (operating in informal factory enterprises and home-based) and self-employed women from earning more income, improving their status in society and reducing potential risk.

New technology greatly affects women in factory settings as it usually displaces them first since it often requires greater skills than they possess. Therefore, men initially receive the new jobs and eventually they are passed along to women at cheaper wages when the technology becomes commonplace. Conversely, a lack of appropriate technology can also prevent home-based wage earners and self-employed women from potentially increasing their productivity, reducing their household burden and/or improving presentation (e.g. packaging) to enable them to compete with new imports.

The implementation of production processes can also preclude women from participating (e.g. shift work and longer hours prevents women from working on account of safety issues, child care and household responsibilities). This is less of a factor for home-based workers and self-employed women.

Women's low status in society influences many of the above issues such as preventing them from increasing their resource base, earning an equal wage and accessing appropriate technology (or the jobs created by new technology). Clearly, the above factors interact with one another. Thus, increasing women's ability to gain from the globalisation process will require an integrated strategy that identifies how these factors influence each other and intervenes accordingly.

2.1.2 Capturing Greater Benefits From Globalisation

The previous section considered some of the factors that presently prevent many women from fully benefiting (if at all) from globalisation. This section examines some of the avenues that are available to women that would enable them to improve their positioning in the labour force and society as a whole. Selecting an approach depends on the desired objectives and specific characteristics of women's informal employment in a particular location. For instance, past data indicate that the majority of women in East Africa's the informal sector are self-employed and operating individual enterprises (e.g. female street vendor). The reasons for this include: a shrinking manufacturing sector; declining foreign investment; and downsizing in the public sector primarily caused by structural adjustment policies and low economic growth. Based on this information, one can assume that activities might include improving women's access to credit, land and/or small business training to improve their productivity and generate additional income. Improvements in market facilities, such as electricity, toilet facilities and proper stalls, and assistance with securing licenses to operate in urban areas are other possible needs. Food packaging, to preserve products and make them attractive to consumers (domestic and international) would assist self-employed women compete with imports and bargain

for a better price. Feasibility studies to identify potential niche markets overseas would also assist self-employed women to expand into international markets (if this is a goal).

On the other hand, in South Asia many women are engaged as wage workers either in formal large scale factories (e.g. export shrimp industry in Bangladesh) or under informal sub-contracting arrangements (e.g. home-based or in informal processing sheds). Women wage earners in the informal sector require information regarding any harmful substances they are exposed to, safer production processes, better access to toilets and child care facilities, reasonable working hours, production task variation to break up the monotony and increased wages. Advocating for occupational health and safety legislation for female workers (home-based and informal factories) and minimum wages are other activities which can reduce the chance of women being exploited by multinationals.

Clearly, there is overlap between workers' needs in the individual enterprise category (i.e. self-employed) and the wage worker category, therefore similar activities may be undertaken that target both groups. For instance, both self-employed women and wage earners would benefit greatly from skill development and training, better working conditions and access to housing, land, credit, etc. Wage earners in factories or processing sheds could potentially gain from training in small business development to mitigate the volatility of the global labour market and promote greater self-reliance. This relates back to the discussion regarding improving women's limited resource base in the "Gender and Globalisation" section-a characteristic both groups share.

2.2 The Case of South Asia and East Africa

South Asia and East Africa each represent a different response to globalisation and increasing market liberalisation. Globalisation is more of an immediate concern in South Asia as compared to East Africa. The latter is more concerned with the impacts of structural adjustment. This variation is reflected in the different strategies governments have adopted in the two regions.

In South Asia, national governments have been pursuing inward looking strategies (otherwise known as import substitution). Consequently, this strategy has resulted in a market place characterised by both large and small scale enterprises as well as traditional and non-traditional ones. This industrial self-sufficient approach included many subsidies that led to capital intensive production techniques. (Joekes. 1995). Reardon (1998) reports that women's labour is concentrated in family based enterprises and low skilled work, thus new technology has had little impact on them as they mainly employ traditional techniques.

Conversely, globalisation has had less of an impact on women in East Africa due the region's small share of international trade. Structural adjustment programmes in East Africa pressured governments to adopt outward looking strategies (i.e. export promotion) to generate foreign exchange earnings. This has led to extensive promotion of cash crops (primarily men's responsibility) and a reduction in subsistence food crops (i.e. women's). Massive public sector downsizing has cut social expenditures (shifting the responsibility to women) and increased women's competition from men in the informal sector. Downsizing has another negative effect as there is a direct correlation between public sector salaries and demand for informal goods and services (ILO. 1995).

Self-employed women in East Africa have gained somewhat from structural adjustment policies. Recent literature (Baden. 1998a) has found that rising food prices from structural adjustment has led to many people switching over to less expensive domestic informal products and also some women engaged in trade and cash crop farming have benefited from export promotion. The following section outlines the support services that

are available to women in the informal food processing sector and how they can improve their social, economic and political standing.

2.3 Support Services For Women in The Food Processing Sector

The previous sections have addressed the reasons why women have not captured greater benefits from globalisation (i.e. limited resource base, technology, production processes and women's low status). This section will consider support services in greater detail. The objective of these services is to remove the obstacles that prevent women from accessing, controlling and owning resources and playing an equal role in society. These restrictions must be addressed if women are to increase their productivity, control over their lives and the decision making that impacts them as well as take advantage of the globalisation process. Since many women in the informal sectors in South Asia and East Africa are poor, many of these support services are also found in poverty alleviation programmes.

2.3.1 Increasing Women's Resource Base

Firstly, women's resource base needs to be increased. This is an important issue in both South Asia and East Africa. Most women engaged in informal activities in the two regions are characterised by illiteracy, minimal education, low skills and a lack of basic necessities. Rudimentary support services are required in the form of literacy classes, basic numeracy, health education and skills training. Female wage earners and individual enterprises/self-employed workers in South Asia and East Africa would benefit considerably from these essential services.

Relieving some of women's household burden is important as well. Some NGOs have been experimenting with mobile creche units in urban areas. This type of service would assist women engaged in informal activities outside the home such as self-employed women operating in markets or streets and female wage earners in informal factory settings (i.e. under sub-contracting arrangements in South Asia).

Gender segregation has particularly aggravated the issue of women's limited resource base in Pakistan, Bangladesh and Northern India and contributed to high illiteracy and fertility rates. This greatly affects women's access to support services and projects must incorporate women's isolation into their design and implementation (e.g. utilise female staff and go to women's homes).

Self-employed women require training in areas such as small business management, book-keeping, food processing techniques, marketing and entrepreneurship development. This type of training is especially important in East Africa since the majority of informal sector women in this region are self-employed and operating their own businesses (and to a lesser degree in India). Women would benefit from training focused on upgrading their skills, introducing new technology and possibly new products. The establishment of small business advisory centres to assist female entrepreneurs would also be a positive reinforcing activity. Manuh (1998) states that the most successful literacy projects in Africa have been combined with income-generating activities, thus incorporating the two may be a wise strategy.

Female agro processors in East Africa would also benefit from agricultural extension services to enable them to gain more benefits from cash crop farming and improve subsistence food production. Furthermore, agricultural extension services should not be limited to rural areas. There is growing research on the subject of female urban agriculture in Nairobi and Kampala and its potential not only for subsistence use but for market and trade. Agro support services should also target these women.

Generally speaking, any courses, training and/or skill development programmes should be located near women's homes (especially if they are home-based workers), reflect their education levels, technical abilities and work schedules. Technical training and on-site demonstrations are normally the most effective in both South Asia and East Africa.

Credit remains a critical element for developing informal enterprises. Wide coverage remains an issue across rural areas in East Africa and South Asia. This is indicated by the high percentage (e.g. approximately 73% of rural households in Bangladesh) of informal rural enterprises in South Asia who rely upon informal sources of credit such as relatives, savings (if they have it) or moneylenders. Some NGOs are experimenting with mobile credit units in an attempt to reach the rural poor or disadvantaged groups and increase the coverage of credit services.

Self-employed women who operate informal food processing enterprises require credit to invest in their business to increase productivity and income. Credit can be used to purchase inputs and new equipment/tools, try out new products and market their goods. Wage earners will also benefit from credit, particularly if they are motivated to enter the informal market as part of a household survival strategy. For instance, short term, flexible emergency credit could be provided for the purpose of covering unexpected medical costs, children's school fees or funeral expenses (as opposed to expanding a short term informal income generating activity).

Overall, women do not require, nor desire, very large amounts of credit. Credit services must include low transaction costs and interest rates, simple loan procedures and repayment schedules should reflect income streams from the activity. Providing women in the informal sector with information regarding the availability of credit is also needed to increase awareness.

Adopting special measures is required in areas of South Asia where gender segregation is the norm. In the past, husband and wife teams have been employed in rural areas to deliver credit and extension services while accommodating segregation practices. Ensuring that women are borrowing money for their own objectives and not male relatives is another factor that must be considered. Research by Rahman (1997) on the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh found that up to 60% of Grameen's loans were used by men and 78% for purposes other than those approved (e.g. meeting household needs). He recommended providing smaller loans and closer supervision of their use. The Bank has incorporated reforms such as requiring members to pay interest on the remaining balance of their loans (not the initial amount) and allowing 10 year members to withdraw their initial contribution from the reserve fund (many apply this to their outstanding balances). Other credit programmes have found that scheduling frequent repayments at smaller amounts and coinciding payments with the activity's stream of income has also been successful.

2.3.2 Increasing Women's Status in Society

Increasing women's status in society is a challenging process and mobilising women into groups or associations is generally considered a critical element for achieving this objective. Mobilising women is beneficial for a number of reasons: to pool resources; provide mutual support; increase women's bargaining power with traders, suppliers, employers, governments (local and national) and advocate for policy reform at local, national and international levels. Women's groups, associations, organisations, co-operatives and unions afford women increased visibility and provide a delivery channel for disseminating information, new technologies and services (e.g. health, legal advice). There are a number of different ways women can be organised. The two general strategies for organising women which reflect the present discussion regarding wage

workers and self-employed enterprises in the informal sector are grassroots mobilisation and national organisations.

Firstly, individual enterprise/self-employed workers can be organised into producer or marketing co-operatives to assist women purchase raw materials and equipment, market their products, develop linkages with distributors, identify new customers and foster bargaining power. Educating members regarding the role of co-operatives and organisations, membership responsibilities and rights is often required. In addition, managerial training is beneficial to enable further expansion, responsiveness to changing circumstances and sustainability of the organisation itself. Caste and social restrictions in India may require membership screening to prevent the poorest of the poor women in co-ops from being marginalised by elite women if the objective of the project is poverty alleviation. Self-employed market women can more effectively lobby for market space, improved facilities and less harassment from authorities in groups.

Secondly, wage earners can be organised into trade unions or women's associations to lobby national governments for labour legislation reform (and/or enforcement), minimum wages, negotiate better working hours and working conditions. Mobilising wage earners is particularly critical in South Asia given the large number of female wage earners and foreign employers involved in the region. Extensive sub-contracting arrangements (especially in India) requires that both formal and informal sector women be organised together. In many cases, informal home-based workers and factory workers may have the same employer. For this reason, recent literature suggests that trade unions should be organised based on locations (i.e. communities or provinces) rather than factory setting.

Women's trade unions or associations can also lobby employers to incorporate gender considerations into the selection of production processes and the introduction of new technology as well as provide members with safety nets to reduce the negative impact of job losses caused by restructuring or new production processes. These organisations represent a force which can monitor the activities of foreign employers operating in their country and mitigate the volatile nature of globalisation. National organisations will increase women's visibility in a country and can facilitate the inclusion of gender issues into trade agreements and national macro planning decisions.

2.3.3 Technology and its Impact on Women

Technology is a double edged sword. On the one hand it can relieve women of labour intensive, time consuming household burdens and improve the productivity of their business. On the other hand, many female wage earners have lost their jobs when new technology replaced their role in the production process or they were unable to access new employment opportunities because they lacked the necessary skills to operate new machinery.

Regarding technologies positive aspects, women in the informal sector often employ traditional production and processing techniques and basic equipment that are time consuming and/or physically demanding (e.g. manual pounding of grains). The introduction of appropriate technology can overcome some of these factors by reducing women's workload and improving productivity. Time remains a serious constraint facing women. The technology needs of women in both the household and enterprise should be assessed prior to planning and the technology itself should be inexpensive, small, simple and preferably manufactured domestically. Sterilisation equipment, pots, utensils, cooking stoves and hand held grinders are some examples that can benefit self-employed food processors. Other appropriate technologies include, fish smokers/dryers, oil processors, solar dryers for fruits and vegetables and improved bee hives.

The introduction of new technology has often led to the elimination of female wage worker's employment in South Asia. It is not the technology itself that is at fault rather it is a combination of women's limited resource base and low status in society. Female wage earners are frequently employed in job functions that require traditional or little skill, thus they are often displaced when technology eliminates their role. Women must be trained in diverse and transferable skills that will enable them to either find work elsewhere if they lose their jobs or be able to operate new machinery. Women's lower position in society also affects their chances of capturing new functions as a result of new technology, as men are normally given the opportunity first. Mitigating the impact of new technology on women's employment thus becomes a matter of addressing their resource base and status in society.

Past experience in South Asia has illustrated that the introduction of new technology can result in men taking over functions that previously employed women (e.g. rice mills in Bangladesh replacing women's traditional processing role). This impact can be mitigated by introducing technology in conjunction with training women on its use, operation and repair.

2.4 Key Findings

The previous discussion illustrated a number of dimensions affecting women's employment in the informal sector and the impact globalisation can have on their lives. Certainly, the two main groups of women in the informal sector, wage workers and individual enterprise/self-employed workers, are constrained by a limited resource base and low status in society. This is true in both South Asia and East Africa and measures need to be taken to address these issues. Overwhelming consensus agrees that improving women's employment opportunities, eliminating social barriers and reducing their exposure to the negative impacts of a rapidly changing world order requires economic and socio-political interventions.

There is considerable variation between globalisation's influence on South Asia and East Africa. It has had a considerable impact on South Asia and created an interdependent relationship between the formal and informal sectors through sub-contracting arrangements. This is particularly true in India. Furthermore, policies protecting small industries in India do not appear to be the only factor influencing the informal sector and its growth. Studies indicate that many young women who entered factory settings as wage employees burned out quickly due to the repetitious and monotonous nature of their work, combined with long hours. These girls, now middle aged, were often left with no transferable skills and had few options but to enter the informal sector. In the future, this impact could be negated by better working conditions, skills training, mobilising women to bargain for fewer hours, better pay, etc., to prevent this burn out factor.

Gender segregation in Bangladesh, Pakistan and Northern India is an additional issue to keep in mind. The number of female home-based workers is rising and information regarding exactly how many, what their activities are and their characteristics is erratic at best. Micro-level data from Bangladesh suggests that women in traditionally segregated locations who enter the labour force are not doing so by choice, rather they must as part of a household survival strategy. Additional research into the reasons why women are entering the labour force involuntarily may highlight key areas for intervening (e.g. landlessness may be the root cause). The case study of the shrimp export industry in India indicates that segregation norms can be overcome if the new employment areas are viewed as female domains (e.g. the processing sheds). This allows women to leave their homes and enter the marketplace with minimal loss of family prestige.

In South Asia, particularly areas where women are segregated to a greater degree, women's associations, organisations, groups, etc., are greatly beneficial towards

overcoming social restrictions, lobbying governments and providing a support network. Caution is advised with respect to outside agencies funding, formalising or controlling women's organisations as group dynamics can in effect, create new power relationships among the members themselves (i.e. one or several women seizing the group's benefits or using the group for their own personal gain) or establishing a group with no clear function. One cannot assume women in a community or activity are a homogenous group. Literature suggests that identifying existing informal networks, kinships, etc., and incorporating them into organisational planning while including other women can overcome this potential problem.

In East Africa, globalisation is not an immediate concern. Structural adjustment and its ensuing market reform is more important and has contributed to declining foreign investment and a shrinking manufacturing sector. The export orientation of East African governments has led to many female agro producers and processors losing subsistence food plots to the production of cash crops. This affects women's (and family's) nutrition which in turn has long term effects on their labour productivity. Generally speaking, women who are engaged in cash crop production are not involved in the marketing side, thus they are not gaining full benefits from their labour. Marketing co-operatives or price information systems would assist female producers determine a fair price for their efforts (e.g. radio broadcasts).

Cutbacks in social expenditures (namely education and health) in East Africa have forced women to seek additional employment to cover family expenses. Reductions in social expenditures have present and future effects: increasing school fees and gender biases have forced many girl children to forego their education, meaning that their future opportunities will be limited.

Poverty and food insecurity are said to have contributed to a growth in off-farm informal activities in East Africa's rural areas. This challenges past perceptions that the informal market is an urban phenomenon. More information is required on this subject to identify who is involved, what they are doing and why. Promoting rural enterprises for rural demand may have considerable potential for generating employment, income, overcoming infrastructure barriers and reducing rural-urban migration.

Referring specifically to women's informal employment in East Africa, research has found that a high majority women in this sector (urban and rural) are self-employed. Therefore, targeting individual enterprises/workers in a specific country and location (e.g. urban or rural) for further research to identify their specific needs and programming accordingly represents a deserving area for intervention. A word of caution, economic empowerment for self-employed women must be realistic. To accomplish this, women's actual and potential skills as well as the marketing feasibility of their products must be incorporated into project design and implementation. Small food processing enterprises have two available avenues for taking advantage of globalisation: target international markets or domestic markets.

If the objective is to enter the international market, niche markets are the most likely avenue to pursue. Although considerable gains can be generated from niche marketing it requires a substantial initial investment in research to get a product up and running. For instance, foreign market feasibility studies are necessary to identify potential products, assess consumer preferences, determine packaging needs and market goods. Stringent international quality standards must be met or any problem with the product can shut down the entire market.

The alternative approach for informal self-employed enterprises, and one with potentially less risk, is to target domestic consumers. Many East African women in the informal sector filled a gap caused by the rising costs of imported food. The main objective for targeting domestic markets is to produce goods that are mass consumed. Developing a

female producer's marketing skills is an important component to enable them to strategically position their goods in the market. This may also include educating the public about the nutritional aspects of traditional foods and supporting domestic producers versus foreign refined products. This strategy would apply equally as well in South Asia as East Africa, accounting for differences in consumer preferences, raw material availability and marketing requirements.

Due to the fact that a high majority of women in East Africa are self-employed and operate individual informal enterprises, women's capacity to work together in a co-operative, association or organisational setting may require strengthening before women can be fully mobilised. In areas or sectors where women have successfully joined together and acquired land, market space, etc., measures must be undertaken to ensure their efforts are not usurped by men once their ventures show a profit. This problem can be addressed by developing linkages between female producers/processors and the market; educating women about their legal rights and continuing to develop women's capacities.

Research and programming experience indicates that trade unions, workers and women's organisations cannot be localised if they are to be successful (i.e. must expand beyond organising workers in one factory or one sector). The diverse nature of informal activities, the large degree of sub-contracting and different employers requires a holistic approach (such as SEWA's). Efforts to organise female workers should therefore be undertaken at the community level with self-realisation as a critical element to altering how women perceive themselves and build confidence. (Reardon et al. 1998). Occupational health and safety (or general health issues) are found to be the most effective approaches for initially mobilising women.

Technology benefits women if it relieves them of household burdens (e.g. water pumps and hand millers) and hurts women if it replaces their labour with machinery (e.g. rice mills in Bangladesh). Participatory approaches to the introduction and implementation of new technology can lessen the chance of men dominating the new process. The supply of inappropriate equipment can eliminate otherwise well planned income generating projects, thus pre-feasibility studies are strongly recommended to mitigate this possibility.

To adequately address women's economic empowerment, simply providing one or two services (e.g. literacy training and credit) is insufficient. A package of services is needed to address women's numerous constraints. Provision of credit, literacy training and development of women's business skills must be combined with market studies to identify domestic demand and export potential (or possible threat from imports). In addition, these services must be supported with policy advocacy work at the ground level (e.g. through women's organisations and co-operatives) and/or the national level (e.g. through trade associations and women's unions) to include women's issues in macro planning and shift power relationships towards equitable gender distribution. Considering the numerous cases where women's income efforts have been expropriated by men (especially in East Africa) it is necessary to address gender issues in conjunction with support services. A longer term strategy is also necessary if the cycle of poverty and inequity is to be broken.

India's SEWA has been applying an integrated programming approach in its efforts to improve women's lives. Loans are available for household and household production expenses (e.g. cement floors, building porches). Social services such as social security and health services are also provided in addition to credit. SEWA's experience has found that health is a successful and non-threatening way to initially organise women and that producer co-operatives can provide more immediate benefits to self-employed or home-based women, unlike advocating for policy change which can be a long process. (Jhabvala and Tate. 1996).

The need to integrate the provision of support services reflects the rationale that empowering women requires an economic and socio-political approach. The decision regarding how to combine services depends on the location, objectives and women involved. Generalising across a region, country or sub-sector is inappropriate. Much in the same way that market feasibility studies are needed for individual enterprise/workers to enter into the market place, greater in-depth studies are needed with respect to a specific location or group that reflect the desired objectives (e.g. poverty alleviation for tribal women operating individual informal food enterprises or policy advocacy for female wage workers under sub-contracting arrangements). Based on the information, specific support services can be combined accordingly.

2.5 Avenues for Further Research

This paper has provided a very general overview of the issues affecting women engaged in the informal sector in South Asia and East Africa and the impact of globalisation. It was found that globalisation offers both possibilities and hazards. If women are given the opportunity to improve their capabilities than it can have a positive impact on their lives: increased income leading to increased economic and social worth. But, if the opportunities reinforce gender inequalities by offering women less pay and severe working conditions, then they are being subjugated to a new form of exploitation (global as opposed to societal).

A great deal of literature has been devoted to discussing the lack of macro data and invisibility of women in the informal sector and production processes. The overwhelming consensus agrees that more information is needed. On-going debate continues regarding how to theoretically approach further research of women in the informal sector. This paper applied a wage earner and individual enterprise/worker approach to examining women's informal employment. No matter which strategy is adopted, it must be remembered that women may have multiple sources of income in addition to food processing. Thus, all activities and programming should include services that adopt a holistic approach.

Due to the general nature of this paper and the wide spectrum of issues covered it is strongly suggested that additional country-specific research is required to further assess women's roles in agro and food processing, their characteristics, motivations and immediate needs. Much of the information on women's informal activities is either dated, limited to case studies or failed to capture part-time, seasonal activities or home-based work. Globalisation is moving along at a rapid pace and any programming or research decisions must be based on current information. Thus, a preliminary stage for gathering location specific information is recommended prior to programming. A participatory approach to research and project identification involving the targeted beneficiaries and including open ended questions is advised. For example, women may not consider their post harvest activities as 'work' even though it increases the crop's value, therefore when asked what work they engage in, they may neglect to include this activity. A gender baseline survey is also recommended to determine what gains have resulted from programming efforts.

As stated previously, any programmes aimed at developing business ventures should be conceived from a marketing standpoint as opposed to a welfare-orientated one. Efforts must extend beyond organising and training women to produce a particular good to determining what the needs of the market are, what are consumers preferences, what is the product's demand (local or export) and does this entail specific packaging and quality requirements? Market studies will assist programmers in this regard. The informal sector has been successful and grown in large part based upon its quick responsiveness to the

market and consumer preference. Any ventures or programming should aim to retain this flexibility and build upon it to improve women's lives.

3. Key Actors

South Asia: General

Banking With the Poor Network

India:

- Self-Employed Women's Organisation (SEWA)
- Women's World Forum (WWF)
- Annapurna Mahila Mandal (AMM)
- Dastkari (marketing organisation supporting female producers).
- Bhagavatula Charitable Trust (BCT)
- Andhra Pradesh Dairy Development Co-operative Federation Ltd. (APDDCFL)
- Women's World Banking

Bangladesh:

- Grameen Bank.
- Bangladesh Rural Advance Committee (BRAC).
- Proshika Kendra
- Micro-Industries Development Assistance Society (MIDAS).
- Rangpur-Dinajpur Rural Service (RDRS), provides credit and is part of the Lutheran World Service.
- Bangladesh Mohila Parishad.
- Bangladesh Jatiya Mohila Ainjibi Society.
- Naripokko.
- Gono Shahajja Sangstha (GSS).
- Bangladesh Rural Development Board
- Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Co-op.
- UBINIG (works through a Trade Union Development Education Centre-Sramabikash Kendra).
- Women's Entrepreneurship Development Programme (WEDP) sponsored by USAID.

Pakistan:

- First Women Bank.
- Aga Khan Rural Support Programme.
- National Rural Support Programme (credit supplied by First Women Bank)
- Balachistan Rural Support Programme.
- Sarhad Rural Support Programme.
- Orangi Pilot Project (credit and savings)
- Basic Urban Services for Katchi Abadis (BUSTI).
- Sungi
- Kashf Foundation (Grameen replica: microfinance institution).
- Sin Rural Workers Co-operative Society (provides credit to rural women).
- Family Planning Association of Pakistan (FPAP) supplies credit.
- Applied Socio-Economic Research Centre.

East Africa: General:

- City Farmers in Vancouver, Canada have undertaken considerable research into women's urban farming practices in East Africa.

- International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) have provided female agro processors with appropriate technology in Africa.
- Council for Economic Empowerment of Women in Africa (CEEWA) has chapters in Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania.
- Gender and Economic Reform in Africa
- Association of African Women Entrepreneurs
- Women in Law and Development in Africa (WILDAF)

Kenya:

- Informal Sector Loans Programme (ISP)
- National Christian Council of Kenya (NCCK).
- Kenya Rural Enterprise Programme (KREP).

Tanzania:

- Women in Law and Development Africa (WILDAF).
- Women's Advancement Trust (WAT).
- Tanzania Gender Networking Programme (TGNP)
- Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF).
- Promotion of Rural Initiatives and Development Enterprises (PRIDE): Provides credit to self-employed women and women operating enterprises in the informal sector.

Uganda:

- Kiyembe Women's Co-operative Saving and Credit Society.
- Federation of Informal Sector Organisations (UTDDA).
- Uganda Small Scale Industries Association.
- Women's Department, Co-operative Alliance.
- Uganda Women Engineers' Association.
- ACFODE
- Uganda Women's Finance and Credit Trust Fund.
- Uganda Association of Women Lawyers (FIDA).
- Department of Women's Studies, Makerere University.

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