

**Trade Liberalization Policies & FTAs: Social and Gender implications of EU-India
FTA, 25th March 2008, New Delhi**
**Workshop organized by Heinrich Böll Foundation (India) in collaboration with
WIDE- Network Women in Development Europe (Brussels) & South Asia Institute
(New Delhi)**

Context:

Next to its prominent role in the WTO negotiations at multilateral level, India started to become more actively engaged in bilateral trade agreements with several countries in the recent years. Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) have already been signed with countries such as Nepal and Sri Lanka and economic co-operation agreements with Singapore, ASEAN and Japan are being pursued despite hindrances.

The launch of the negotiations on an EU-India FTA in June 2007 added another bilateral trade and investment agreement for great relevance to the list. During recent years relations between the EU and India have undergone remarkable changes, both in terms of objectives as well as in content. In this context the “broad based bilateral trade and investment agreement” is supposed to be part and parcel of a “strategic partnership” between “allies at the world stage”. Both the parties identified certain common strategic interests and aim at completing the negotiations within two years.

The prevailing lack of transparency on both sides, gave civil society actors in the “two largest democracies in the world” reasons for demanding timely and knowledgeable information about the current state of negotiations, the various interests involved and the key issues at stake. For civil society organizations the important question is what kind of macro-economic and trade policies need to be established that serve the interest of sustainable economic development, poverty eradication, gender equality and women's social and economic empowerment. The general presumption is that FTAs will lead to greater economic efficiency and employment generation thereby having a buoyant impact on poverty levels and gender equality. These assumptions have to be as much critically reviewed as the general belief that trade liberalization is gender neutral.

There is an imperative need for information dissemination, awareness raising and capacity building on trade and market liberalization policies in general and more specifically in the framework of the EU-India FTA and its implications for social development and gender justice. The time is ripe as negotiations are on and the agenda could possibly still be influenced by civil society organizations. The workshop wants to set up a platform for NGOs from India and the EU who wish to network, exchange information, engage in monitoring and influencing of the FTA negotiations from a social and gender justice perspective.

Workshop Objectives:

The workshop attempts to set in pace a process that is driven by a critical mass of decision shapers, civil society, media and academia working in tandem to influence EU and Indian trade policies towards a fair trade agenda which integrates social development, human rights and gender equality as its core values.

The workshop would provide the following:

- Enhanced understanding of current trade policies in India and the EU and the FTA negotiations.
- Create awareness about different interests and perspectives involved in the negotiations.
- Sensitization of social and gender implications of trade policies.

HBF India and WIDE Collaboration

HBF India and WIDE in close collaboration with Indian and EU Partners are initiating an awareness raising and advocacy project “Gender and Social Justice Relations of the EU-India Trade relations” that aims to influence and shape the EU-India trade relations in such a way that they are consistent with women’s rights, social and gender justice as well as environmentally sustainable.

The present workshop is part of a series of awareness creating measures that will be undertaken in the following year in both India and Europe. We hope to be able to create alliances and forge partnerships with like-minded stakeholders/actors that participate in this event.

About: Heinrich Böll Foundation (The Green Political Foundation)

The Heinrich Böll Foundation is part of the Green political movement that has developed worldwide as a response to the traditional politics of socialism, liberalism and conservatism. Our main tenets are ecology and sustainability, democracy and human rights, self-determination and justice. We place particular emphasis on gender democracy meaning social emancipation and equal rights for women and men. We are also committed to equal rights for cultural and ethnic minorities and to the societal and political participation of immigrants. Finally, we promote non-violence and proactive peace policies.

To achieve our goals, we seek strategic partnerships with others who share our values. We are an independent organization, that is, we determine our own priorities and policies. We are based in the Federal Republic of Germany, yet we are an international actor in both ideal and practical terms. The India office has been operational since 2002 in New Delhi.

About: WIDE – Network Women In Development Europe

WIDE is an European network of women’s organizations, development NGOs, gender specialists, human rights’ and social activists, established in 1985. WIDE is composed of eleven national platforms and one regional platform with a secretariat based in Brussels, Belgium and has strong links to partners in the global South. WIDE monitors and influences international economic and development policy and practice from a feminist perspective. Through information dissemination of our research and analysis, lobbying and advocacy, networking and capacity building, WIDE promotes gender equality and social justice worldwide.

WIDE has a well-established approach to the trade-development-gender nexus. As a European based network WIDE is especially focusing on the role the EU is playing in this global trade and development scenario.