



Women's Working Group on Financing for Development Webinar

Series: Macro Solutions for Women, the People and the Planet:

A series of action-oriented dialogues on the macro agendas and the current

crises "A Global Regime of Intellectual Property Rights and Trade:

Who will benefit from the new solutions for the pandemic and the upcoming famine?"

June 17th, 2020.

Co-organized with Third World Network

Summary:

The current dominant trade and Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) are two key policy regimes that have been used to support a system to ensure profits for capital, especially based in the North, while exploiting natural, human and financial resources in the South. Such a global framework has systematically exploited more marginalized socio-economic constituencies such as women, indigenous peoples, rural and farming populations and workers. These groups have borne a disproportionate share of the costs in order to ensure gigantic profits for a few. If we need to change these rules for the better in a post-COVID world, what would that look like? A session that explores these issues and provides the field to plan our actions.

Speakers:

Ranja Sengupta, Senior Researcher, Third World Network (India)

Chee Yoke Ling, Director, Third World Network (Malaysia)

Mariam Mayet, Executive Director, Africa Centre for Biodiversity (South Africa)

Moderator:

Barbara Adams, Senior Policy Advisor, Global Policy Forum (New York)

The Women's Working Group on Financing for Development (WWG on FfD) is an alliance of women's organizations and networks who advocate for the advancement of women's human rights and gender equality in the Financing for Development related UN processes.

Co-Conveners:

Rosa G. Lizarde, Global Director, Feminist Task Force, Global Director, rosa.lizarde@feministtaskforce.org

Emilia Reyes, Program Director, Policies and Budgets for Equality and Sustainable Development, at Gender Equity: Citizenship, Work and Family; Co-Convenor, emilia@equidad.org.mx

Concept note:

The current international macro policy framework has used several interlinked and mutually supporting instruments to ensure profits for capital, especially based in the North, while exploiting natural, human and financial resources in the South. The current dominant trade and Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) are two key policy regimes that have been used to support such a system. Such a global framework has systematically exploited more marginalized socio-economic constituencies such as women, indigenous peoples, rural and farming populations and workers. These groups have borne a disproportionate share of the costs in order to ensure gigantic profits for a few.

The global trade policy paradigm has seen developing country governments' autonomous trade policy being gradually superimposed by a complex and forever-intensifying system of multilateral (read WTO), bilateral and plurilateral trade and investment agreements. These commitments have forced them to increasingly sacrifice policy options to ensure any form of self-reliance even in critical products, and to pursue a balanced and development oriented macro-economic policy package. Starting from a simple system of exchange of goods, the global trade system has gradually got into areas of deep policy regulation to ensure the continuance of such an extractive global system. IPRs represent one of the extremes of such extraction. In the name of promoting innovation by protecting the innovator's property rights over new technology or knowledge, it has given immense control to corporations to monopolise and manipulate production and distribution of key products. This has severely compromised access for people-at-large to essential products such as medicines, healthcare, seeds and food by limiting supply and raising prices. Women have suffered more as they possess less than the fair share of knowledge and ownership of IPRs, but have paid disproportionately for the high costs.

In the current crisis posed by Covid19, this threat to governments' policy space in general and to the access to medicines, healthcare and food in particular, poses an enormous challenge. The web of these rules has both partially led to the particularly vulnerable situation our governments find themselves in, but have also bound their hands in dealing effectively with the crisis. Again, it is marginalized groups who pay the heavier price; the migrant and informal worker loses jobs and incomes, the women in the household face increasing domestic violence, the poor have no access to treatment or even to social distancing. We are all possibly on the verge of a major health, food and environmental crisis.