Globalization and Families: Meeting the Family Policy Challenge

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1. Introduction

In our contemporary environment, globalization directly and indirectly affects family life through the strategies and programs created by economic and social policies. In order to strengthen national capacities that prioritize and reinforce families, it is necessary to understand the complex relationship between globalization and work-family issues, family poverty, and the social exclusion of certain groups from mainstream societies. While there is no general consensus among policy scholars and politicians about how to define family policy, a wide range of studies stress that all policy making should assess the impacts of various explicit and implicit social policies from a more holistic, family perspective (Bogenschneider, 2000). From this standpoint, families can be strengthened by having an interrelated, coordinated set of universal social programs that are available to all members of their respective societies. Yet, in a globalized environment, many social policies that directly impact and assist families are being dismantled or substantially reduced. As we witness the widespread economic, political, and technological transformations brought about by globalization, we need to consider which policy responses are fundamental and responsive to family well-being. This will ensure that we strengthen the physical and psychological health of individuals, and mitigate the conditions that are conducive to social unrest when people are vulnerable, and economically and socially marginalized.

What is Globalization?
While there is much debate about how to define globalization, mainstream approaches tend to focus on its economic nature and the processes that encourage nations, business and individuals to become integrated into the global market. From this perspective, globalization is commonly understood to be a primarily uncontrollable force that encourages a free market ideology and perpetuates the transnational movement of capital, labor, and goods. Broader definitions recognize its political and social dimensions and point to the new information and communication technologies as a significant aspect of globalization. From this wider perspective, globalization is associated with transnational phenomena and new forms of bridging geographic and cultural distances. This form of communication has been accompanied by the ability of individuals the world over to connect in virtual communities across interests and concerns.

Globalization as a term, entered mainstream discussions in economics and political science from the mid-1990s onwards (Rodrik, 1997). Much of the focus on globalization has been on the flow of money and capital between countries, the changing role of governments vis-a-vis their citizenry, the increased movement and migration of

individuals within and between countries, and the growth and expansion of multinational corporations and transnational organizations. For example, globalization is often associated with the growing power of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. These entities have played a critical role in incorporating developing countries into the global market place by providing loans and encouraging entrepreneurial, open market activities. However, these organizations are often also associated with implementing Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) that due to a series of negotiated actions and activities, have led to a reduction in government services such as health and education in many developing countries. A serious disadvantage of the mainstream focus on the purely economic effects and challenges of globalization is that it ignores the social consequences of the process on families and communities (Baars, Dannefer, Phillipson, & Walker, 2006).

The effects of economic restructuring, which are in part the product of globalization, are felt in particular by vulnerable individuals such as children and elderly living in poverty, people with disabilities, and marginalized populations. While children and the elderly are often discussed as distinct groups it is important to note that both are usually reliant on their families, and that it is the social capital provided by the family that ensures the quality of life for them. By reducing or eliminating programs that affect families, such as nutrition, health, early care, and educational opportunities, lifelong disadvantages that have long term social ramifications may be created.

Defining Families
There exists no formal consensus on how to define families from a global perspective but there is agreement that some form of family or kin relationships characterize all societies. Families play a central role in societies as they are the primary site for reproduction, in socializing the next generation, in early education, and in stabilizing adult personality formation. Despite their centrality, it is also understood that the concepts, definitions and perceptions of family life as well as the policies that impact families are not static. While it is unclear if the changes in families during the course of the 20th century have been greater than in previous eras, we know that the early 21st century is characterized by greater family diversity, increasingly codified in laws. In the industrialized world, the 'traditional' breadwinner/homemaker family no longer constitutes the main family form or the only normative environment in which children are born and raised. Instead, single parenthood, one-person households, unmarried and same-sex cohabitation, and remarried families have become more common and are increasingly accepted as suitable living arrangements. In the developing world, we do not find the same general acceptance of diverse family forms, but we are witnessing an increase in dual-earner households, an upsurge in the number of women in the labor force, and a significant aging of populations.

As individuals, families, communities, and societies increasingly become integrated into new complex globalized systems, their values, traditions, and relationships change (Parkin & Stone, 2004). Globalization transmits new concepts about gender, work citizenship, identity, familial relationships, and women's and children's rights, even to very distant places. However, various groups respond very differently to these images

and messages. In some cases, these concepts empower individuals and their families to change their lives, and in other cases, they are forced into situations that are disadvantageous and destructive. Also, in some places in the world, globalization is perceived as a form of enforced Westernization. The response to this perception is at times a reversal to nationalistic and fundamentalist tendencies. In an effort to preserve 'traditional' values and beliefs people turn back to what they believe are the authentic customs and beliefs of their societies, sometimes even using violent means.

Linking Globalization and Families Through Family Policies
Conflict around definitions and meanings have led to globalization and families being perceived as dichotomous concepts. Globalization is understood to be a modern, anonymous, and unrestrained force, while the concept of families implies tradition, restrictions, intimacy, and close control (Edgar, 2004). However, these types of distinctions obscure the fact that globalization has greatly impacted nation-states' and families' abilities to control their economic and social well-being. Globalization has been accompanied by the movement and restructuring of jobs, and has changed the role that the nation-state plays in supporting families' economic health, income, and maintenance. Governments the world over have had to adjust their welfare and family support systems due to their reduced ability to control monetary flows. As a growing global ideology that stresses entrepreneurship and self-reliance pervades even the most remote regions, the concept of social support services is quickly disintegrating. This phenomenon is accompanied by the power and growth of transnational corporations whose ability to move whole industries in record time to more 'cost effective' locations can destroy regions, families and individuals' lives. Globalization has therefore transformed not just the role of nation-states, but also of families' abilities to maintain and protect their members. Families are compelled to be more self-reliant in an environment where they may have fewer options available to them.

Family policy must take into account the challenging conditions under which individuals throughout world are trying to survive. The social safety net that has traditionally been the purview of the nation-state is being dismantled, and therefore, increased dialogue and action is needed to ensure a viable option. As nation-states reduce their services to families, and as community partnerships between businesses and local collaborators proliferate, new types of oversight are needed to ensure that the neediest individuals are not marginalized, and that families are able to maintain their traditional functions of providing economic and social security to their members.

Accounting for Cultural Diversity within Nation-States
Formulating family policies that respond to globalization is problematic due to the social and cultural heterogeneity that increasingly characterizes most countries. There exists a great deal of variation in the standard of living, opportunities, and customs between rural and urban areas, social class, religious, racial and ethnic groups, and even between regions. Within the same society there may co-exist very different levels of literacy, age of marriage, opportunities for the acquisition of skills and education, female labor force participation, parenting practices especially with respect to gender issues, and marriage

arrangements. Furthermore, marginalized groups are often not included in policy considerations.

The issue is further complicated by the problem that certain cultural practices such as female genital mutilation and gender-based violence are condoned by specific groups. However, these practices are now generally understood to be human rights violations, and need to be addressed by specific laws and family policies. These laws and policies then need to be implemented in rural and remote areas that are often not complicit with these initiatives.

2. Globalization and Concurrent Social Transformations Affecting Families
Dramatic recent changes in the economic and political arenas have been accompanied by significant social transformations. In particular, the global influx of women into the formal and informal labor force and their rising educational levels, have had profound implications for family life. The world over, we are witnessing an increase in two income households and the ability of women to decrease their dependence on the men in their households and communities. These trends have been accompanied by rising divorce rates, later ages of marriage, and the increased ability of women to limit childbearing. In some regions, traditional patriarchal authority structures are being questioned and slowly dismantled (Castells, 2004). Even within the private sphere of the family, the increased earning abilities of women, especially in the West, are contributing to a steady rise in their social status and decision-making abilities. While there may be variability within societies with respect to these trends, the general pattern shows that there is greater choice today than ever before. However, these choices are virtually never decided on individually. Instead, decisions about employment, migration, marriage, gender roles, and caretaking are subject to family life and local culture. For this reason, family policy needs to be at the forefront of every nation-state's agenda.

Demographic Trends
From a global perspective we are witnessing a number of significant demographic shifts. In particular, lowered fertility rates throughout much of the world, with the exception of countries in sub-Saharan Africa, point to the importance of understanding family dynamics and the decisions about family planning. As an increased number of women enter the paid labor force, they tend to postpone childbearing and thus, have fewer children. In developed countries, the demands of balancing childcare and employment often leads to lower fertility rates, and this phenomenon is compounded by higher levels of infecundity at older ages. Low fertility rates in conjunction with a rapidly aging global population, and possible country-level population declines, portends a redistribution of the global population and related power structure away from North America and Europe (Morgan, 2003).

Lower fertility rates are also correlated with the rising age of marriage in much of the industrialized and developing world. For example, Sweden now has the oldest average age of first marriage for men at 35 and for women at 32 years. In contrast, in Bangladesh, the age of marriage stands at 29 for men and 18 for women. However, revised educational policies are creating new norms that encourage educational and skills

attainment before marriage and raise the age of marriage for young women. Unfortunately, this is not a world-wide trend. In sub-Saharan Africa, especially among the rural populations, a low marriage age for girls is correlated with a very high degree of childbearing and illiteracy.

The high degree of individuals aging around the globe is also cause for concern and policy adjustments. According to United Nations predictions, there will be more old people alive in 2050 than children – a first in human history. Based on demographic predictions, the expectation is that by 2030, some countries and regions will see their populations of individuals aged 65 and older reach 25 or 30 percent. Moreover, most of this growth will take place in the developing countries of the world. For example, China currently has 12 million people over the age of 80. By 2050, that number is expected to rise to 99 million (United Nations, 2002).

Global Changing Roles of Women, Men and Children

       A. Transnational Families
An important part of globalization is the movement of individuals within societies and across national borders. Migration is most commonly associated with seeking new work opportunities, but individuals and families often migrate due to political and other social reasons. Due to growing economic disparities within and between societies, large numbers of individuals are moving from rural to urban areas, and from developing to industrialized countries, in search of opportunities and resources. Refugee flows, the growth of global organizations, and the creation of new free trade areas are contributing to a significant growth in international migration. International migration has led to a new type of family form, also known as transnational families in which women are the migrants. Transnational families are characterized by retaining roots in their home societies, and simultaneously also creating new ties in their host countries. While proportionally to the world population, actual migration numbers are low, (currently approximately 3 per cent or 191 million individuals are on the move), modern migration has significant social effects. Most individuals migrate as families or in groups, and their residency in the new host society has a significant impact on both their country of origin, as well as the receiving society (Castels & Miller, 2003). Approximately two-thirds of migrants are currently living in industrialized countries in contrast to the developing world, where about 1.5 % of the population are not native born. In particular, the remittances sent back by migrating workers are an increasingly important aspect of many poorer countries GDPs. In 2009, officially recorded remittances totaled over $414 billion worldwide, with more than 75% of the money being sent to developing countries. The top four receivers of remittances are India, China, Mexico and the Philippines, and the major sources are the US and Saudi Arabia. In 11 countries, remittances were equal to more than 20 percent of the GDP (Migration Policy Institute, 2011).

A critical aspect of the new wave of global migration pertains to the significance of female labor. As employment opportunities have opened up, an increasing number of women are migrating in order to take advantage of these prospects. According to United Nations statistics, approximately 49.6 percent of all migrants now are women (Morrison,

Schiff, & Sjoblom, 2008). In the process of migration, many of these women leave their families, and specifically their children, behind in their home areas. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as 'transnational mothering'. Women who undertake labor migration usually do so in order to provide a better life for their children and loved ones. Commonly, these women take on low-paying menial jobs where they risk exploitation. Yet, they do so because of limited opportunities in their home areas. These women often face criticism both at home and abroad due to the perception that they are 'abandoning' their families. This criticism occurs in a context where nation-states have tightened their policies with respect to immigration. Nonetheless, many of these migrating women undertake the decision to seek employment in other places for the collective good of their families and to provide better opportunities for their children.

B. Gender, Work-Family Issues

Particularly in the developing world, but also in parts of the industrialized world, we are increasingly seeing what is termed as the 'feminization of the labor force'. This term refers to the growing number of women who are working outside of the home in paid employment. In 2010 in the U.S. 59.2 percent of women were in the paid labor force, including 71.6% of women with young children. In Europe, 53 percent of women were working outside of the home in contrast with 62 percent in sub-Saharan Africa, 48 percent in the Caribbean, 36 percent in South Asia, and 29 percent in North Africa and 69 percent in East Asia (United Nations, 2010). In many cases, these women have jobs that are more flexible than traditional U.S. 8 – 5 jobs, and in informal types of work that are part time and come without benefits. Both in the U.S. and other countries, this trend has been accompanied by a decrease in the types of jobs that have regularly been held by men – full time jobs with benefits for the whole family (Safa, 2002). As an increasing number of women take on this type of work, and as more men lose their role as the primary breadwinner, gender roles and relationships are changing. We see this particularly in the United States, Canada, Australia, and Europe, where there has been an increase in new living arrangements such as cohabitation, a rising divorce rate, and out of wedlock births (for example, out of wedlock births now equal 41 percent in the U.S.). Moreover, cross-cultural research reveals that the concept of marriage is shifting because the increased number of women working in the paid labor force affects economic bonds in families. For example, dual earner households are becoming the new norm in the industrialized world. As women are able to earn their own living, they are less likely to stay in destructive and abusive relationships, or they may choose not to marry at all. These changes have resulted in a global rise in divorce and an increase in female-headed households. As women's roles are changing, diverse family structures are becoming more common even in places such South East Asia and the Middle East, where cultural beliefs about traditional roles in families have long played a significant role in preserving certain aspects of those societies (Moghadam, 2003). The globalizing processes that draw women into the paid labor force conflicts with traditional values about the roles of women and men (Yan & Neal, 2006), and has led at times to nationalistic, traditional or violent responses.

In many parts of the developing world in particular, girls and women face major inequalities with respect to health, education and labor market opportunities; this has

implications for their choice of opportunities as well as personal advancement. However, a tendency to view gender issues from a Western perspective, which values empowerment and paid labor force participation, limits what we actually know about the situation of poor and rural girls and women in the developing world. For example, statistics do not usually include local community participation and there is no real data on informal and unpaid work by women and girls, such as caretaking and housekeeping. Asset ownership is often not assessed or accounted for (nor is the lack of assets), and we have few exact figures on gender-based violence or the psychological toll caused by exhaustion and stress levels.

C. Poverty

The most contentious aspect of globalization is its association with global poverty rates. There is inadequate scholarly understanding about contemporary social conditions beyond the fact that individuals and their families attempt to cope under specific societal contexts and that their lives are influenced by national and transnational policies. For example, Nissanke and Thorbecke (2005) argue that, "despite the utmost importance of understanding the globalization-poverty nexus, the precise nature of the various mechanisms, whereby the on-going process of globalization has altered the pattern of income distribution and the conditions facing the world's poor is yet to be carefully analyzed" (p. 3). Ravallion (2003) also calls attention to the fact that the 'starting point' for many countries differs with respect to their initial level of economic development, making it difficult to generalize across countries and regions. While there is much debate about the metrics for computing poverty statistics, the World Bank reports that the number of individuals living on less than $1.25 per day is projected to drop to 883 million by 2015. This indicates that the extreme poverty rate of 1990, 42 percent of the global population, will be reduced by almost half, meeting the MDG target. However, the decline in poverty varies by region with China and East Asia at the forefront of progress, and the populations living in sub-Saharan Africa accounting for approximately 70% of the poorest of the poor. Due to population growth in sub-Saharan Africa, the world's poorest individuals increased from 11 percent to 27 percent in the period between 1981 and 2005. Meanwhile the percentage of the global population living under $2 per day in Latin America, the Caribbean, Eastern Europe and Central Asia, dropped from 70% in 1981 to 47% in 2005. Due to global population growth, the actual number of individuals living under $2 per day remains at approximately 2.5 billion (World Bank, 2011).

D. Children

In the contemporary policy debates, which assume the declining importance of families, children constitute an often forgotten element. Yet, raising healthy, educated children is critical to the success and continuation of every nation-state. Children make up one third of the world's population and are arguably the most physically, economically and socially vulnerable group. Currently children under the age of 18 make up nearly 48 percent of the population in the world's least developed countries, in comparison to 21 percent in the world's industrialized nations. In both the industrialized and the developing world, the rate of child poverty is abysmal. Despite variations within and between countries, social protection for children is far less developed than it is for other

vulnerable groups such as women or the elderly. In part, this stems from a tendency to focus on children outside of their particular family and community contexts.

This worrisome state of children exists despite the fact that with the exception of the US and Somalia, all other countries have signed onto the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. According to the Convention, children have certain basic rights that include the right to life, to his or her own name and identity, to be raised within their own families or cultural groupings to express their opinions, to be protected from abuse and to have their privacy protected. Problematic is also the issue of child labor. Current statistics indicate that child labor may actually be on the increase. UNICEF estimates that approximately 158 million children ages 5-14 are engaged in child labor (UNICEF, 2011). Also of concern is that in many of these cases, should the children lose their jobs, they and their families would in all probability suffer even more catastrophic circumstances (French & Wokutch, 2005). Complicating this issue even further is that the statistics on child labor do not highlight which children around the world live on the street and participate in a wide range of legal or illegal activities or are involved in prostitution.

3. Policy Recommendations:
From the preceding analysis we can discern several critical points where policy recommendations and innovations would greatly alleviate the social conditions that poor and vulnerable families often find themselves in as a result of globalization. Principal among these is that as nation-states continue to dismantle social safety nets, a larger number of families will be at greater risk. Due to a lack of economic resources these families will be unable to attain health care, adequate nutrition, and schooling.

Importantly, in many parts of the world, gender inequities are found at every level of social life and greatly handicap and stigmatize young girls and women. Especially in the developing world, girls from rural and or low-income families are often disadvantaged from birth onwards. Ethnographic studies indicate that in many cases, cultural norms stipulate that girls receive less food, fewer educational opportunities, and little or no access to financial resources. Once they reach puberty, many girls are restrained from social interactions outside of their families, are often taken out of school, and forced to dedicate their time to domestic labor. Especially in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, girls often marry at a young age and immediately begin childbearing. This limits their access to educational, economic and social opportunities and constrains them to a lifetime of poverty.

Complicating this scenario is that as governments decrease spending as a response to policies enforced through the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund and market forces, social service needs are increasingly met through non-profit and non-governmental entities (NGOs) that focus on providing specific programming or initiatives for families. An important response has been new innovative collaborative partnerships between nation-states and NGOs in particular. While this is a partial solution to the problems brought on by globalization, the lack of oversight and coordination of services

also introduces new challenges. In order to begin to address some of these issues, new holistic policy responses are needed.

1. Assisting Poor and Marginalized Groups:
Provision of Cash Benefits to Vulnerable Families through Conditional Cash Transfers (CCTs). Cash benefits were initially introduced in Latin America but are increasingly employed in some countries in Asia and Africa. Giving needy families cash benefits for specific purposes, allows them access to heath care facilities and encourages them to continue their children's schooling. For example, recent evaluations of cash benefit programs in Bangladesh have indicated that rural poor families who are recipients of targeted educational CCTs, are increasingly encouraging their daughters to continue their secondary schooling. The girls thereby increase their educational and economic opportunities, and tend to marry at a somewhat older age. Recent evaluations also indicate that child health and nutrition usually improve as an outcome of CCT programs (Rawlings & Rubio, 2003).

One critical aspect of the CCT programs is that vulnerability of families needs to be defined not just based on income levels but also on issues such as disabilities and social marginalization. Recent evaluations also indicate that mothers need to be the beneficiaries of CCTs in order to promote gender equity in their families. While CCTs are obviously not a sufficient solution for alleviating all the problems of vulnerable families, they do act as a significant aspect of a country's social protection net (World Bank, 2011).

Recommendations:

- Beneficiaries' eligibility should not be based on solely on poverty status but needs to include other measures such as accounting for families that are taking care of individuals who have a disability or the frail elderly.
- Beneficiaries' eligibility should be reviewed periodically, allowing for the movement in and out of programs.
- Continuous evaluations of program impacts and outcomes need to be conducted including accounting for unanticipated effects and long-term sustainability of behavioral changes.
- The gendered effects of CCTs need to be brought to the forefront and assessed. For example, while CCTS raise the status of women in their households, they also overload women with new and increased responsibilities, and at time reinforce traditional gender roles.
- Issues of inclusion and exclusion of families and communities need to be a central focus of evaluations.

2. Moving Towards Global Gender Equality:
Formal and informal educational programming that specifically addresses gender specific issues. Governments need to disseminate information through educational and community based venues and initiatives that stress the elimination of gender based

violence; the importance of education for both boys and girls, the sharing of domestic responsibilities between men and women; and the elimination of gender stigmas. Formal and informal educational initiatives that teach about gender equity can assist in raising girls' social status in their families and communities, and lead to them being more productive citizens. When girls' social status improves, there is a lessening of gender based violence and the stigma that has accompanied being born as a girl in many places. Boys and men need to be educated in order to challenge gender stereotypes, attitudes, and behaviors and to foster positive views on girls' education and equal sharing of household responsibilities.

Recommendations:

- Governments need to develop a national policy that outlines specific interventions for ensuring that girls continue their education past primary school.
- More female teachers need to be trained and male teachers need to be sanctioned for gender abuses.
- Gender sensitive curricula need to be developed or expanded that eliminate gender stereotypes and encourage girls to develop their skills and talents and teach boys concepts of gender equality.
- Curricula need to be revised to teach girls market-relevant skills such as in business and technology.
- Government and NGO sponsored initiatives need to reach out to socially marginalized groups, from which most girls who are not in school come. A focus needs to include girls living on the street, girls with disabilities and girls who are sexually exploited.
- Specific national legislation needs be introduced and enforced universally in order to prevent the early marriage of girls.
- Surveys and evaluations need to capture the informal sector activities of girls and young women in order to better assess how their time is being allocated.
- New ILO labor legislation needs to be supported and implemented in order to protect girls from being overburdened by domestic labor.

3. Reducing the Void Created through Cuts in Social Services
Providing Educational and Health Services to Strengthen Families through Effective Partnerships with NGO's. As governments cut social services to individuals and families, NGOs are increasingly filling this niche. However, this often leads to a disconnected set of programs and services. In order to be truly effective, a more holistic family focus needs to be embedded in the programs and services that are being promoted and implemented by local, national, and transnational NGOs. For example, it is now commonly understood that in particular, educational programs and health services are fundamental to creating stronger families and communities that can better meet the challenges of globalization. But these programs must be connected to each other, need oversight, and need to be evaluated in local contexts. Thus, policy responses need to take

into account these factors in order create integrated effective educational and health services.

Recommendations:

- Local and transnational NGO's need to collaborate to form more holistic partnerships that better meet the needs of families.
- Collaborations between national governments and NGO's need to continually focus on family issues.
- Multi-national businesses need to partner with nation-states and NGO's to develop national action plans for youth employment, including a special focus on investing in girls as a mechanism to build sustainable, profitable businesses.
- Community-based educational programs for all ages need to be fostered through formal and informal collaborations between NGOs and nation-states.
- New studies need to be conducted highlighting best practices and effective collaborations between local, national, and transnational NGO's and governments with respect to providing services to families.

Conclusion

A cursory overview of the debates about globalization reveals that an integral and little understood aspect of the globalizing process is that increasing global inequalities and the changing role of nation-states with respect to social support necessitate new policy responses. However, these responses are dependent on region, differences between groups and the interrelatedness of economic, political, and social factors. In other words, globalization does not lead to homogenous problems nor are the same policy responses effective in all countries or even for every group within the same country (Population Council, 2005). Even though the challenges created through globalization may appear to be similar on the surface, local circumstances dictate how these issues are perceived and the type of response that they elicit. For instance, in developing countries, governments often focus less on reducing internal class inequalities and serving their poorest and most vulnerable populations, and more on policies and programs that decrease the differences between themselves and wealthier nations. These states are frequently concerned with programs that increase wage labor and move them to the level of industrialized countries (Rudra, 2008). A highly globalized environment has also led to greater challenges with respect to the education of their populations. In comparison to even just thirty years ago, today's workers need greater skills in order to be employable in the contemporary marketplace. This places all nation-states in the position of having to provide more comprehensive services, in order to make their workers competitive in the global labor force. What is often lost in analyses of policies and programs is that there are significant gender dimensions to the programs that are needed in order to prepare and train particularly vulnerable populations to survive and develop in the globalized environment.

Evidence from various regions around the world illustrates that girls and women's lives could easily be improved through the institutionalization of some relatively simple

initiatives (Population Council, 2005). An examination of some programs that actually have made a difference in girl's and women's lives illustrates that families and communities can play in integral part in encouraging, protecting, and furthering opportunities for girls. Understanding the lives of girls and women, and the economic and societal restrictions they face, is the first step in creating interventions that will lead to them having brighter, more successful and productive futures.

In developing, instituting and monitoring social policies, we need to be aware that families act as a buffer between globalizing forces and the choices and challenges that women, men, and children face on a daily basis (Edgar, 2004). Complicating the equation is the fact that globalization has varying effects and means different things depending on where people live and their particular social, political, and economic situation. Globalization has been accompanied by economic, entrepreneurial and educational opportunities. However, globalization has also meant that certain groups have become poorer or are treated in a way that is not in synch with their particular culture or situation. Moreover, a distinct omission in many of these debates is that particularly in non-Western contexts, family groups often function specifically as economic units (Kelly, 2001). Decisions with respect to who works, what they do, and if they work near their home or in a far away locale is closely tied to family decision making and often family survival. Thus, understanding the linkages between globalization and families is critical and needs to be an inherent aspect of responsive family policies.

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