

Foreword

Global trade and investment policies are having a dramatic impact on employment relations and work arrangements around the world. But there is no single meaning of increased liberalization for the global workforce. The impact can be both negative and positive and differs by geographic location, by industry and trade, and by employment status.

At the Sixth Meeting of the Commonwealth Ministers responsible for Women's Affairs (WAMM) in New Delhi, India in April 2000, globalization, and specifically trade liberalization and privatization, were seen as having transformed the social, economic and political landscape of the Commonwealth. Ministers saw globalization as presenting new opportunities and challenges to policy-makers who should take steps to ensure that women and men benefit equally from liberalization and are protected equally from its negative effects.

To date attention has tended to focus on the negative effects of globalization, particularly on weak and vulnerable economies, and on the women and children within them. However, there is also a need to take steps to ensure that weak societies and weak groups of people are enabled to take advantage of the new economic opportunities which arise from globalization.

It was with this intention that a project was initiated jointly by the Commonwealth Secretariat's Social Transformation Division and its Economic Affairs Division to develop this book, *Chains of Fortune: Linking Women Producers and Workers with Global Markets*. Its focus is on the positive experiences of women producers and workers in the informal economy who, in many parts of the world, comprise the majority of the economically active population and who could contribute much more to growth of output and exports if they were enabled to do so.

This book contributes to the 2003 Commonwealth Aso Rock Declaration's vision of a Commonwealth that is committed to a more equitable sharing of the benefits of globalization. It explores practical examples from Commonwealth countries of how governments have supported (or could support) the

economic and export efforts of informal women producers and workers, and of the complementary roles that other institutions – such as membership associations, local and international NGOs, private corporations, consumers' associations and fair trade organizations – can play in this process.

This publication complements another book that is simultaneously being published in the Commonwealth Secretariat series on gender mainstreaming in critical development issues, *Mainstreaming Informal Employment and Gender in Poverty Reduction: A Handbook for Policy-makers and Other Stakeholders*. It represents the growing recognition of the need for governments to focus on employment, and especially informal employment, as a path to achieve both gender equality and poverty reduction.

The development of this book has been a collective effort of many groups and individuals. It contains contributions from 20 authors from nine Commonwealth countries. Of these, we would particularly like to thank those who led their research teams. These include: Jacqui MacDonald, Pauline Tiffen, Adimaimalaga Tafuna'i, John Cretney, Nazneen Kanji, Stephanie Barrientos, Simeen Mahmud and Swasti Mitter. We also would like to thank Chris Stevens of the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex for providing early inputs on trade policy, including guidelines for authors, and Sheila Page of the Overseas Development Institute for providing an overview of the case studies from a trade policy perspective.

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