

The documents below consider the economic role of women. Read them **both** in order to answer **all** the questions on the question paper.

Document 1: adapted from *Participation in the Economy*, by Kate Scholz. The article was published on the website of Globalization101 which is a resource aimed at promoting a greater understanding of globalisation. The article was published in 2015.

Globalised economies require a labour force of a size that must include women, but women's employment varies greatly by region. A gender gap exists in employment: a 24.8 percentage difference between men and women in the employment-to-population ratio in 2012 according to the Millennium Development Goals Report. In 2012, 64 per cent of women were in the work force in Eastern Asia and Oceania, the greatest proportion among all regions. In North Africa, only 18 per cent of women work. The vastly different percentages may be attributed to social-cultural factors, such as the belief in many Arab nations that women should not work, or the tight political control over women in places such as Saudi Arabia. Similarly, South American women participate in the labour force more as they age, while women in the Middle East and North Africa drop out of the labour force in great numbers when they marry and have children.

A gender wage gap exists all over the world, ranging from a 9.3 per cent difference between men and women in Belgium to 40 per cent in South Korea. This can be largely explained by the type of work that women go into or, for many women, the type of work that is available for them. What accounts for these differences? In many cases, cultural barriers, especially in the relationship between women and men within households and communities, impede increased economic participation, or undermine the quality of that participation. Globalisation is changing this. Globalisation has the potential to improve women's economic achievement. Increased employment opportunities for women in non-traditional sectors might enable them to earn and control income, provide a source of empowerment and enhance women's capacity to negotiate their role and status within the household and society.

Increased participation in the work force also implies increased hazards for women. Women's jobs outside the home tend to be the lowest earning, least secure, and most dangerous in the economy, especially in periods of recession that plague most developing countries.

In 2013, Rana Plaza, a garment factory outside Dhaka, Bangladesh, collapsed, killing at least 1127 workers. Over half were women. Bangladeshi women are often supporting large extended families, and working for the garment industry is often the only option other than working as a farm hand. Jobs in the garment industry do elevate their status, but women are often powerless in the face of dangerous working conditions.

The dearth of labour laws, or ignorance of enforcement of the labour codes in practice, allow for the exploitation of women. In Guatemala, women constitute 80 per cent of the textile factory sector, and thousands provide services as domestic servants. In both sectors, women have only a precarious claim on the rights to Guatemala's legally mandated minimum wage, work-week lengths, leave time, health care under the national social security system, and privacy protections. Often they are subject to physical and/or sexual abuse.

Though globalisation may have increased women's vulnerability and dependency, there is still hope that prioritising women's issues has yielded progress and will continue to do so.

Document 2: adapted from an article called *Economic Empowerment*. It was published on the web site of the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), which is based in Washington but has offices in Africa and India, and was published in 2015. The aim of the ICRW is to empower women.

Women have the potential to change their own economic status, as well as that of the communities and countries in which they live. Yet more often than not, women's economic contributions go unrecognised, their work undervalued and their promise un nourished.

Unequal opportunities between women and men continue to hamper women's ability to lift themselves from poverty and gain more options to improve their lives. Research shows that inequalities persist in the way paid and unpaid work is divided between women and men – in the fact that women remain the sole caregivers at home, and in their limited access to resources. What's more, these imbalances slow economic growth.

Women's economic empowerment – that is, their capacity to bring about economic change for themselves is increasingly viewed as the most important contributing factor to achieving equality between women and men. But economically strengthening women – who are half the world's workforce – is not only a means by which to spur economic growth, but also a matter of advancing women's human rights. When governments, businesses and communities invest in women, and when they work to eliminate inequalities, developing countries are less likely to be plagued by poverty. Entire nations can also better their chance of becoming stronger players in the global marketplace.

It is important to consider some of the positive outcomes of women's economic empowerment. Where women's participation in the labour force grew fastest, the economy experienced the largest reduction in poverty rates. When women farmers can access the resources they need, their production increases, making it less likely that their families are hungry and malnourished. When women own property and earn money from it, they may have more bargaining power at home. This in turn can help reduce their vulnerability to domestic violence and HIV infection. When women have access to time-saving technologies – such as a foot-pedalled water pump or a motorised scooter – economic benefits can follow. ICRW research has found that technology helps women increase their productivity as well as launch income-generating pursuits and entrepreneurial ventures. Those kinds of outcomes empower women to become stronger leaders and to more effectively contribute financially to their families, communities and countries.

The bottom line? Investing in women helps speed up the development of local economies and create more equitable societies.

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