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GENDER INEQUALITY, GLOBALIZATION, AND THE FALLOUT OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Executive Summary

Gender inequality generally refers to unequal treatment or irregular perceptions of individuals based on their gender, and it often designates discrimination against women. Gender inequality encompasses a wide range of inequalities, including barriers to education and healthcare, as well as restrictions on asset ownership, political participation, and labour participation. Globalization is regarded as an important factor affecting women in the economy and society, and it is thought to help reduce the extent of gender inequality. Globalization is often described as an international process of interaction and integration among people, firms, and governments. This process has led to worldwide economic, social, and political transformations over the last few decades. The process of globalization has been adversely impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly during the peak of the outbreak. There have been significant disruptions in international supply chains and reductions in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and international trade flows, and many countries have adopted protectionist policies against foreign suppliers. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic has restricted cross-border movements of labour, and negatively affected tourism. It was also exploited by some political parties and governments to embolden nationalistic and populist tendencies in politics and society. There is a potential trilateral connection between the COVID-19 pandemic, globalization, and gender inequality since the COVID-19 pandemic has direct effects on gender inequality, and indirect effects on gender inequality through its fallout on globalization. The main objective of this study is to analyze the indirect channel, where the effects run from the COVID-19 pandemic through globalization to gender inequality. The investigation starts by scanning the effects of globalization on gender inequality, and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on globalization. It also outlines the direct effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender inequality. It proceeds by empirically examining the effects of globalization on gender inequality, and by using the empirical results to analyze the corresponding short-run and long-run effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on gender inequality. The empirical analysis uses globalization datasets that are derived from the database of the KOF Swiss Economic Institute, and that include an overall globalization index, and that also distinguish between economic, social, and political globalization. The empirical analysis relies on gender inequality datasets that are sourced from the database of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and that comprise an overall measure of gender inequality (*i.e.*, the Gender Inequality Index [GII]), and corresponding elementary indicators that cover three basic dimensions: reproductive health that encompasses maternal

mortality rate and adolescent birth rate, empowerment that is characterized by female education attainment (secondary level and above) and female parliamentary representation, and labour market that is depicted by female labour force participation rate. The empirical results highlight the beneficial effects of globalization on gender parity. In particular, the estimates reveal that both social and economic globalization reduce gender inequality, and improve various indicators that characterize women's well-being, livelihood, and social/socio-economic status. These effects are often expressed through the *de facto* dimensions of social and economic globalization. In some cases, the *de facto* globalization effects are complemented by the corresponding *de jure* dimensions. The estimates show that the effects of political globalization on the overall measure of gender inequality and on the elementary indicators of gender inequality are statistically insignificant. The empirical findings in this study underscore positive relationships between globalization and gender parity, and they reveal that these favourable effects primarily occur through economic and social globalization channels. Accordingly, deceleration of the globalization course or reversal of the globalization process (*i.e.*, de-globalization) would adversely impact the progress toward decreasing gender inequality. While the long-term implications of the COVID-19 pandemic for globalization are still unfolding, this project discusses the potential channels through which this pandemic could slow or reverse globalization, as well as the implications for progress toward reducing gender inequality.