

Globalization—Positive or Negative?

What is **globalization**? Does this mean that all countries of the world are becoming the same? Does it mean the **integration** of economic, political, and cultural systems around the world? Does globalization mean being able to find the same stores and restaurants in every part of the world? Does it mean that individual countries will not be able to make business and trade decisions on their own but will have to consult other countries? If these are the realities of globalization, what kinds of impacts will it have on the way we live? Indeed, the concept of globalization raises many questions and **controversial issues**.



Some argue that globalization is a **positive** development as it will give rise to new industries and more jobs in **developing countries**. Others say globalization is **negative** in that it will force poorer countries of the world to do whatever the big **developed countries** tell them to do. Another viewpoint is that developed countries, including Canada, are the ones who may lose out because they are involved in **outsourcing** many of the manufacturing jobs that used to be done by their own citizens. Outsourcing refers to obtaining goods by contract from outside sources. This is why you may find many of your clothes with labels from developing countries such as Malaysia, China, and the Philippines, where they can be produced at lower cost. Critics of outsourcing feel that no one wins with this practice. Workers in Canada and other developed countries may lose their jobs while those doing the work in poorer countries get paid much less while working in poor conditions. What can be done about these realities?

Global trade gives Canadians access to many products, such as fruits, that cannot be produced here. Global trade means that produce such as bananas, mangoes, oranges and kiwi fruit are easy to find in our grocery stores. This implies that farmers in developing countries have an opportunity to produce and sell more goods and make a better living. Some people in developed countries, however, feel that the wealthier countries purchasing the products also are the ones who make all the production and trade rules that they must abide by, thus reducing their chance at **fair competition** in the world market place. In addition, this forces developing countries to produce **export** foods wanted by the wealthier developed countries instead of producing local foods to feed their own populations. The development of orchards and plantations by **multinational** companies in the poorer countries of the world often means reduced land available for production of local food supplies. What can be done about these issues? Will more emphasis on "**fair trade**" make any difference?

Factors related to globalization can also cause workers to **migrate** from their homelands in poorer countries to more developed countries to find work. The **migrant labourers** may leave their families and live temporarily in another country, thus disrupting the family and social fabric of their home communities. Furthermore, most of their earnings may be sent home, reducing the benefits their employment could have in the country where they are employed. Often foreign workers **immigrate** to another country and, because they live in their own neighbourhoods, continue to follow their religions, customs, and even follow their own laws, they are sometimes accused of not being willing to adapt and accept their new country. On the other hand, often these newcomers complain that they are poorly treated and cannot live the way they would like in the more developed countries they have immigrated to. This raises questions of the role of **human rights**, as a consequence of globalization. Should we consider the rights of workers and the responsibilities of new immigrants in our shopping practices? Does it matter?



Many developing countries need new industries and the jobs these industries bring to improve their economies through globalization, but they do not want to lose their own **culture and identity** in the process. Many developing countries fear that increased globalization may lead to loss of control over economic and political decisions and may also threaten their traditions, language, and culture. With the predominance of American pop culture as well as political and economic influence around the world, many developing countries see globalization as a form of “**Americanization**” that is undermining the fabric of their traditional societies. In addition, many developing countries do not have stringent rules about **environmental protection**, thus industries do not need expensive pollution control equipment, resulting in serious air, water, and soil pollution that would not be acceptable in Canada. Are the social and environmental impacts of globalization things to be concerned about?

There are many arguments for and against globalization. As **citizens** and **consumers** in a developed country, should we be aware of the potential impact our purchases of food, clothing and other items may have on people in developing countries? Should we be asking ourselves why many items produced in developing countries are so much cheaper than goods produced in Canada? Are we familiar with the living and working conditions of the workers in poorer countries that produced these items? Do we know how much they get paid for their labour? Are we familiar with their lack of protection and benefits in the workplace? Are we aware of the environmental impact of production in developing countries? Should we support those companies and stores that promote fair trade even if it may mean slightly higher prices? What is our responsibility? What are the potential impacts of our consumer choices?

Globalization—Positive or Negative? That is the question!