
DAWN Southern Feminist Activists at Rio +20



GITA SEN, India

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Over thirty years of experience working for gender equality and women's human rights as a respected scholar, a skilled negotiator, and a powerful advocate. Gita holds a PhD in Economics from Stanford University. She is a professor of public policy at the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore, India, and also adjunct professor of population and international health at Harvard University. She is on the Governing Body of the United Nations University, and a number of other institutions, as well as the president of the Health Economics Association of India. As a scholar, her book *Development, Crises, and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives*, written as a contribution to the UN women's conference in Nairobi is a classic that helped transform thinking on gender and development. She has published extensively, and her recent work includes research and policy advocacy on the political economy of globalisation and economic liberalisation, the gender dimensions of population policies, and gender equity in health. Her co-edited book *Population Policies Reconsidered: Health, Empowerment and Rights* has been highly influential in reshaping the population field.

Gita's knowledge of and experience with intergovernmental processes and UN agencies has both depth and range. She has participated, as an NGO representative and official government delegate, in the series of UN conferences in the 1990s including the Beijing and Cairo conferences and their five- and ten-year reviews. In these she developed a reputation for strategic vision and skilled negotiation for women's human rights. She was thereafter invited to be on the governing board of UNRISD, on high level advisory committees for WHO, on UNDP's CSO committee, and has worked closely with UNFPA at both national and global levels. She was the first chairperson of the External Gender Consultative Group set up at the World Bank after the Beijing conference. Her approach embodies a strong belief in the importance of the different parts of the UN system working together to protect and promote gender equality and women's human rights.

She is a founder member of DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era), a network of women scholars and activists from the economic South that has built a strong reputation since the time of the Nairobi Women's Conference in 1984 for strong analysis and effective and focused advocacy. She also provides advice and support to many civil society organizations and networks in both the South and North. She is a powerful speaker and advocate for gender equality and in her capacity as a voice for women's human rights, she has addressed the UN General Assembly and the Swedish Parliament among a number of influential sites.

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NOELENE NABULIVOU, Fiji
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Noelene works with other south feminist and women's rights advocates, wider civil society networks, local and state governments in the Pacific, and in broader regional and global movements to advance human rights and sustainable development alternatives. Noelene is currently especially engaged in interlinkage approaches to gender, economic and ecological justice. Noelene has an undergraduate degree in International Development and Peace Studies from University of New England (2002 Faculty Prize), and a Diploma in Community Arts Management from the West Australian School of Art, Design and Multimedia.

Since 2004, Noelene was the Coordinator of a Fiji feminist NGO, 'Women's Action for Change' (WAC). A key part of Noelene's work is advocacy and movement-building. This includes media work, and oral and written presentations and submissions at national, regional and global civil society, government and into various multilateral systems, processes and conferences. She has made multiple presentations to UN Special Rapporteurs on Land and Housing, VAW, and also Human Rights Defenders. Noelene also facilitated the Pacific Islands Forum Security Committee Track 2/civil society process and was a Pacific GPPAC delegate and Founding Chair of 'Pacific People Building Peace'; Beijing+15 and CSW54 session presenter, and COP+15.



ANITA NAYAR, India
University of Sussex
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A feminist activist and scholar engaged in research on the social and ecological consequences of the commercialization of indigenous medicine in India. Twenty years of experience working nationally and internationally on issues spanning economic globalization, development, women's human rights and climate justice have shaped Anita into a leading organizer and advocate, a strategic policy analyst.

Since 2007 she has been an Executive Committee member of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), a network of feminist scholars, researchers and activists from the economic South. In her previous capacity as Acting Executive Director of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), Anita facilitated the 'Women's Caucus' through five major UN conferences of the 1990s and worked with a broad swath of women's

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movements, governments and UN agencies to bring a gender perspective on environmental, social and economic issues to bear on inter-governmental negotiations and agreements, as well as national and local policies.



CAI YIPING, China

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Ms. Cai Yiping, currently based in Beijing China, is Executive Committee member of Development Alternatives with Women in New Era (DAWN), a network of feminist scholars, researchers and activists from the economic South working for economic and gender justice and sustainable and democratic development.

Prior to joining DAWN, she served as the Executive Director of Isis International and was an Associate Professor at the Women's Studies Institute of China. She was the journalist for China Women's Daily for ten years and actively participated women's NGOs after the UN 4th World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. As the journalist and activist from 1995 to 2008, she wrote extensively on the issue of women's human rights and actively involves in the action research, media advocacy and policy intervention for women's rights in China.

She is one of the resource persons for DAWN workshop and Asia consultation and workshop on Gender Economic and Ecological Justice (GEEJ) held in April 2012 in Thailand and coordinated the GEEJ China training workshop in Beijing in collaboration with Chinese civil society organizations in April 2012. She is one of the contributors for the Chinese NGO Report on Rio+20, in charge of the chapter on gender equality, which launched in June for Rio+20 Summit.



NICOLE BIDEGAIN, Uruguay

International Council on Adult Education
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A sociologist and activist engaged with political and social organizations since she was 14 years old including REDLAC, International Council for Adult Education, and Gender Economic and Ecological Justice Latin America. She has researched the gender dimensions associated with the activity of the informal waste pickers in the city of Montevideo.

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LALAIN P. VIADO, Philippines
DAWN Associate

Lalaine P. Viado is DAWN's Cairo+20 Advocacy Associate. She has been an advocate of women's rights, especially sexual and reproductive rights for more than a decade, and has done work nationally, regionally and internationally. She is from the Philippines.



MAUREEN PANJUELI, Fiji
Pacific Network on Globalisation
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Maureen Panjueli is the coordinator for the Pacific Network on Globalisation (PANG) a leading Pacific Regional NGO that works on economic justice issues. As coordinator, Maureen manages the work of her team and partner organisations. She is a dedicated activist and has pursued environmental and social justice issues for over a decade.



SOPHEA CHREK, Cambodia
Social Action for Change
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As a former garment worker, Sophea had been working in a factory for about five years. In 2005, she was employed by an NGO called Womyn's Agenda for Change (WAC).

Sophea Chrek is a law student at the Royal University of Law and Economics in Phnom Penh, an activist with Social Action for Change (SAC) and a founder of the Cambodian Women's Movement for Social Justice (SWMSJ). As a member of SAC, Chrek provides technical and advocacy support to women's organizing groups, with a focus on garment factory workers, to empower women to take leadership roles at union and factory levels and to promote labor rights as women's rights. As a part of this work, she is leading a healthcare campaign called "Pay or Die," which has produced an educational documentary about the current

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encroachment of government and global policies around privatization of healthcare services in Cambodia. With CWMSJ, Chrek raises awareness and concern around women's rights and the role of women in politics. She is currently engaged in the Free the 15 campaign calling for the immediate release of fifteen activists jailed for peacefully demonstrating on sand dunes that cover what was their village on the shores of Boeung Kak lake.

Boeung Kak lake development is "just one of many cases we can see development impacting people's livelihoods," Chrek said. Communities historically inhabiting and earning their livelihoods from the lake were evicted as the municipal government moved forward with development plans. Calling the lake useless, the government leased the lake and land around the lake covering nine villages to a private joint venture company, Shukaku Erdos Hongjun Property Development Co. Ltd., which began filling the lake with sand in August 2008, causing flooding in nearby villages that forced families to migrate. The municipal government claimed this development would create jobs and other opportunities for many people, Chrek described, despite the violation of the Land Law stipulating that State public property has inherent value and can't be sold or leased for long time periods. Some families agreed to compensation for leaving their livelihood, home, and land, while others felt the development project and compensation was unjust and were evicted.

On May 22, 2012, women from communities previously living along the lake held a peaceful demonstration before Cambodian police moved in to arrest thirteen of the protesters. (A video clip of these events is available at this link: <http://www.licadhocambodia.org/video.php?perm=31>.) During their trial, two community representatives willing to testify on the women's behalf were also arrested. These fifteen individuals, fourteen of whom are women, were sentenced to two and half years in prison, while the seventy-two year old woman was sentenced to a one-year sentence.

She draws attention to development policies harmfully impacting women's livelihoods and their struggles against these neoliberal development policies. Critical of the GDP growth paradigm of development, Chrek says that policy makers need to put human rights, women's rights, and sustainability at the center of development policies, which should respond to the people's needs. She says the government "can't put villagers aside because [they] want to use [the lake] for development and many people have become scared of development because of this kind of" situation. To develop these new policies, Chrek calls for a participatory process that prioritizes the participation of civil society, indigenous peoples, and women—those impacted the most by development policies.

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NORMA MALDONADO, Guatemala

Born in Guatemala, lived in different countries due to the armed conflict and repression in Guatemala have a degree from UCLA, California; studies in Yale University, Goias-Brasil, and currently finishing a degree at the University of Habana, Cuba.

She engaged in resisting neoliberal policies and creating alternatives to protect our territories since 2000 when a series of mega-projects known as Plan Puebla Panama (PPP) was launched to create infrastructural corridors (highways, airports, ports, hydro-electric dams) for the export of natural resources (oil, gas, African palm, minerals, water) from Southern Mexico, Central America and Panama.

In 2003 she co-founded the Mesoamerican Permaculture Institute (IMAP) in Solola, Guatemala – 1500 meters above sea level – to reclaim ancestral practices in caring for mother earth, build homes with local materials and create the first seed bank in Guatemala. That year, after making a presentation on the PPP in a town that borders Chiapas, Mexico, the military raided my house and took three computers claiming that she was involved with the Zapatistas. The repression was tremendous and absurd.

Shortly thereafter IMAP joined a wide spectrum of groups to form Mesa Global, an umbrella organization to protest the invasion of our territories and challenge the Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA). Women organizers educated themselves and communities through popular education, visual aids, videos, workshops and regional gatherings of social movements called Foros Mesoamericanos en Resistencia.

Despite mobilizations, DR-CAFTA was implemented in 2006 and we are seeing a worsening of our situation in terms of food production; women especially are struggling to put food on the table. To confront this she co-founded the National Network in Defense of Food Sovereignty of Guatemala (REDSAG) that later became a regional network with gender chapters in each of the sub-regional hubs including Central America. With seed banks, seed manuals, agroecology, permaculture and a continuous capacity building process they have been able to link with numerous networks and organizations in the hemisphere.

The struggle to defend territories continues as the Guatemalan parliament rubricated a free trade agreement with Europe in 2010. To this endsheco-founded in 2011 an indigenous organization with 14 communities in Alta Verapaz, Guatemala called Rax Ochox Oxlaju Aj, Tierra Verde (green land) and has women's political schools via community radio and workshops. They also collaborate with UNITIERRA in San Marcos, Guatemala – 2800 meters above sea level – on bioconstruction, water collecting cisterns, adobe building, and forest conservation.

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ROMYEN KOSAIKANONT, Thailand
Mae Fah Luang University

Romyen Kosaikanont is an economics lecturer from Thailand. She has been working as a researcher at the Women’s Studies Centre, Chiang Mai University before transferring to Mae Fah Luang University. She has been involved in research on Thai Women’s Human Rights Defenders, Internet Mail Order Bride, and Gender Impacts of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme. In terms of activism, she has worked with various NGOs as a gender experts namely, Sustainable Urban Environmental Management Project, Thai Foundation, Thailand.



MONICA NOVILLO, Bolivia
Coordinadora de la Mujer

Monica Novillo works for Coordinadora de la Mujer in La Paz, Bolivia, a national network of 27 associated NGOs that are committed to promote gender equality and defend women’s rights in national laws and policies. Though her work predominantly concentrates on lobbying for policy at a national level, for two years she has worked advocating women’s rights at regional and international level, such as UN Economic Commission of Latin America and Caribbean, and UN Commission on Population and Development, and now Rio +20. Novillo says it is important to “link what you are doing on the international level and the things you can use for advocacy and accountability [at the national level].”

In 2009 Bolivia passed a new constitution, which was approved by popular vote. The constitution has 37 specific articles on women’s rights including right to live without violence, sexual and reproductive rights, civil rights, security of motherhood (maternidad segura), and equal labor rights. This constitution, says Novillo, “is considered to be by far the most progressive in terms of gender and women’s rights in all of Latin America.”

Women’s groups and other social movements are now to engaging to contribute to and strengthen the judiciary framework – bills and laws – that will support in transforming state structure to adhere to the landmark achievements of the constitution. “We have been working mainly in the political rights laws – we have passed in the last two years the electoral regime law – include the gender parity - alternating women and men in the list of candidates who are running for public office.” The result of this law is already evident with 50% of women in the senate, 27% of female deputies in the parliament, allowing Bolivian women to finally break the glass ceiling of 17%.

This great legal stride, however, must be accompanied by protections for these delegates, as Novillo reminds us, “sometimes the law changes quickly but the mindset of society still needs to

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be transformed.” Recently legislation drafted over twelve years ago, protecting women from political violence and harassment was passed to protect women that have been elected into these high positions. Additionally, more work is needed on political institutions such as penal codes to increase awareness and strengthen penalization of violence against women – sexual harassment, rape, and femicide – and move forward to decriminalize abortion, which is currently a felony in Bolivia.

Bolivia projects itself as a progressive nation - as it has adopted positive, agro-environmental and customary law - thus it is greatly interested in maintaining this position in the international community. Novillo hopes that Rio +20 will “reaffirm the principles of the Beijing platform and principles of Cairo, that would be a basic achievement ... Twenty years after the original conference the governments have to move forward to implement Agenda 21 and other commitments that haven’t been met or achieved. Twenty years from the Rio ‘92 conference, we can say that there is still a lot to do, and we have to do it with no delay because we cannot wait for another 20 years to say we haven’t achieved any of the commitments.”



HIBIST KASSA, Ghana
Student Worker Solidarity Society (SWSS)

Hibist Kassa from Ghana has a deep passion for understanding the current state of political economy. At the University of Ghana in Legon, where she received her undergraduate and masters degree in Political Science, Kassa dedicated the majority of her time as a student, youth and community organizer

with The Student Worker Solidarity Society (SWSS). SWSS fosters an open space where students and members of local trade unions come together to discuss the current political situation and mobilize to make sure their interests are protected. “The objective is to help people feel that sense of power on their level,” says Kassa. “It’s the idea of being an activist in your own right within existing organizations. We push them to press for their concerns.” Education is at the forefront of their struggle. SWSS is currently working to help craft educational programs to build capacity for their trade union members.

An active member of The Third World Network, Kassa participated in a training Institute program: Gender Economic and Ecological Justice organized by Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN). She was quickly incorporated into these panels, voicing her perspective on the land grabs in Africa. With DAWN she participated in the Commission Status of Women meeting and the Association of Women in Development Conference last year. She joins DAWN’s team at Rio +20 as an analyst and strategic expert on political affairs in the economic South.

DAWN at Rio+ 20 Information and Communications Team



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