

BEYOND THE MALESTREAM

Feminist Perspectives on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation

Report on the South Asia Regional Workshop on Political
Restructuring and Social Transformation, organised by
Development Alternatives With Women For A New Era
(DAWN)

29-31 August 1998

Bangalore, India
29-31 August 1998



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DEVELOPMENT ALTERNATIVES WITH WOMEN FOR
A NEW ERA

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29-31 August 1998

Ecumenical Christian Centre, Bangalore, India



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THE NATIONAL COMMISSION ON WOMEN
FOR A NEW ERA

WORKSHOP ON...



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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The preparation of this report would not have been possible without the support and valuable contributions of a large number of individuals and organisations.

DAWN, South Asia, acknowledges with thanks all the participants of this workshop who gave very valuable inputs, and contributed to the regional research process with lively debates and discussions.

Special thanks are due to Anantha Shrestha of Nepal, Fazila Gulrez and Shahnaz Iqbal of Pakistan, Meera Velayudhan of India, Selvy Thiruchandran of Sri Lanka, and Shipra Bose of Bangladesh, who contributed papers at a very short notice. Farah Kabir, Kumudini Samuel and Archana Tamang provided background information on Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal respectively.

Ammu Joseph laboured painstakingly to piece this report together, despite many hurdles along the way. The workshop rapporteurs, Chitra Balakrishnan, Dhanu Nayak and Lakshmi Ananthnarayan, spent many hours over tapes and notes that made this report possible.

Anita Gurmurthy's indefatigable inputs on many fronts made this workshop possible, while Judith Sarah Ben provided valuable secretarial support.

Claire Slatter, DAWN's General Co-ordinator, facilitated the funding for the workshop, while Gita Sen and Vivienne Taylor, DAWN's research co-ordinators, were a bulwark of support in more ways than one.

We thank them all.

The last section of this report highlights the regional planning process for DAWN's network in South Asia, and the issues delineated by the network for future activities in the region.

Vanita Nayak Mukherjee
DAWN's Regional Co-ordinator
South Asia

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Foreword

Beyond the Malestream: Feminist Perspectives on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation is a report of a workshop held in Bangalore, India in August 1998, organised by Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), South Asia. This workshop launched the global research theme of DAWN on Feminist Perspectives on Political Restructuring and Social Transformation (PRST) under the leadership of Vivienne Taylor, DAWN's research co-ordinator for the theme.

The theme of Political Restructuring and Social Transformation attempts to analyse the multiple, complex and dynamic nature of changes that are taking place in issues of governance, accountability and transparency of the state, and seeks to explore political alternatives, forms of governance and strategies for change that would serve the interest of poor women in different regions of the economic South.

The global political economy, buttressed by neoliberal economic policies, has unleashed multiple forces and processes in the social, economic and political spheres that have far-reaching implications for marginalised groups, including women. When this process is juxtaposed with the rise of religious fundamentalism, as in parts of South Asia, the notion and practice of citizenship as it plays itself out for women come into sharp focus.

The DAWN research process attempts to grapple with these issues through collective exploration and analyses with women activists, academics and advocates, with a view that research processes play a vital role and enhance the potential for strategising towards a better world for women. This report encapsulates one such process of exploration.

Since the South Asia workshop, the DAWN research process has been taken forward with similar workshops held in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. In the coming months, several inter-regional workshops will take place, where the analytical framework on PRST developed by Vivienne Taylor will be refined further. This exercise is expected to culminate at the Copenhagen +5 conference, where the implementation of the World Summit on Social Development will be reviewed.

The last section of this report highlights the regional planning process for DAWN's network in South Asia, and the issues delineated by the network for future activities in the region.

Vanita Nayak Mukherjee
DAWN's Regional Co-ordinator
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The DAWN research process attempts to grapple with these issues through collective exploration and analysis with women activists, academics and advocates, with a view that research processes play a vital role and enhance the women's struggle towards a better world for women. This report encapsulates one such process of exploration.

In the global workshop, the DAWN research process was further advanced with similar workshops held in Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa. In the coming months, several inter-regional workshops will take place, which will further refine the PRST developed by DAWN. Further, this exercise is being followed at the Copenhagen +5 conference, where the implementation of the World Summit on Social Development will be reviewed.

The foreword of this report highlights the regional, global and DAWN's network in South Asia, and the role envisaged by the network for future activities in the region.

Vivienne Taylor
Research Co-ordinator
South Asia

DAWN (Development Alternatives With Women for a New Era) is a network of women scholars and activists from the economic South who engage in feminist research and analysis of the global environment, and are committed to working for equitable, just and sustainable development. The network, which encompasses Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and the Pacific, emerged in 1984, on the eve of the international conferences marking the end of the UN Decade for Women (1975-85).

DAWN's platform document for the conference marking the end of the UN Decade for Women, held in Nairobi in 1985, titled "Development, Crises and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives," was a South feminist critique of three decades of development. It highlighted the impacts on poor women of the South of four interlinked and systemic global crises—famine, debt, militarism and fundamentalism. It also offered alternative visions of development that would benefit the majority of women and, thereby, the majority of the world's people. It made a significant impact at Nairobi because it put macroeconomic issues firmly on the agenda of the women's movement for the first time.

That initial document was the product of a process of collective reflection and analysis, as well as ongoing consultation, which has become a hallmark of DAWN's approach. Since then, the network has continued to influence debates on global development issues by offering holistic analyses from a South feminist perspective that is both grounded in women's experience and inspired by women's collective strategies and visions.

Among the recent international events and debates to which DAWN has made substantial contributions are the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992), the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995).

DAWN's research themes provide the central focus for its work at both global and regional levels. Since 1985, the network's global research and analysis has focused attention on macroeconomic issues and the global economic environment. This emphasis was warranted by the sweeping changes in the global political economy that followed the collapse of the socialist regimes and economies—namely, the globalisation of the economic growth model through enforced structural adjustment, and the resurgence

and validation of neoliberal economics, trade liberalisation and treaty mechanisms to compel global economic conformity.

There are close links between DAWN's ongoing work on macroeconomics, pursued under the research theme, Political Economy of Globalisation, and its other research themes, Sexual and Reproductive Rights; Sustainable Livelihoods; Political Restructuring and Social Transformation; Gender, Culture and Society.

POLITICAL RESTRUCTURING AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION (PRST)

Political Restructuring and Social Transformation is a relatively new theme for DAWN. It is closely connected to the network's ongoing analysis of the deepening disorder and crises created by the current global economic regime. Work on the theme is expected to produce a critique of mainstream ideas on governance, accountability, state and civil society, as well as formulate a political framework for social transformation.

DAWN's particular concern is with the impacts of the changing economic milieu on the role of the state and on its capacity to fulfil women's practical needs as well as to deliver gender justice. Work on the PRST theme includes two important elements: an examination and critique of mainstream ideas and concepts related to such issues as governance, accountability and democracy, and the evolution of an alternative perspective that has a gendered approach to these issues.

Consultation on an analytical framework is currently being undertaken through a series of regional meetings. The final platform document is expected to be produced in time for the Implementation Conference for the World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen +5).

THE SOUTH ASIA REGIONAL WORKSHOP

The South Asia regional workshop in Bangalore, held at the Ecumenical Christian Centre, from 29 to 31 August 1998, was the first in the series of DAWN's regional consultative meetings on the PRST theme. It brought together invited participants from five of the seven countries of South Asia:



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